

A PROFESSED COOK.

BY FANNY SMITH.

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A PROFESSED COOK.

BY FANNY SMITH.

"WANTED, a situation by a professed cook. The best city references given."

"The very thing," I mentally exclaimed, as my eye fell on this advertisement in a morning paper. "Yes, I'll try a professed cook this time, for I verily believe that 'good plain cook' is only a synonym for bad coffee, lumpy potatoes, and juiceless meats."

I put on my bonnet, and hurried off to secure the treasure. To my great disappointment she was not in; but, leaving word for her to call in the evening, I went away, hoping that the guests, who were to arrive in a day or two, would not find me cookless, as I had at first feared.

Evening came, and with it a cook. I had been running over in my mind the various questions which I intended asking her, and the various duties which she was to be told she must perform, determined that there should be no excuse hereafter for any omission, because she did not know that such and such a thing was expected of her. I went into the dining-room, (where she had been ushered,) and found her standing in the middle of it, deliberately surveying it,

"This is Margaret McNully, I suppose?" I said, as I went in.

"Yis, ma'am," was the answer, with a slight brogue. "Are you the ould lady's daughter?"

I smiled at this, no doubt; for how could I help feeling the flattery? I, who had been married more years than I choose to tell.

"No. I am the mistress of the house," I replied.

"Oh! yis, I jist supposed ye was the mistress of the house from yer seeing me; but isn't there an ould lady, too?"

"No," I answered, forgetting, in my astonishment at her questions, to put any of my own.

"Thin this isn't Mr. Gordon's house?" she said.

"No. Mr. Gordon hasn't lived here for some years."

"Oh! well, he did live here, and I knew the ould lady couldn't be you; for, you see, I was well acquainted with the family."

"Can you give me good references?" I said,

asking the first question I had been able to do in the interview.

"Oh! yis, I can jist give you the best riferences in the city. You see, ma'am, I'm a professed cook. I can do everything in the way of cooking in the world. I can make all kinds of soup, and pastry, and fancy dishes you can name; and as for desserts, there is nothing I can't do."

My heart fell. I began to fear that she could do too much; but I thought of my expected guests, and determined to give her a trial, at least.

"If you can do all those things, I ought to be satisfied," I said. "Can you make Charlotte Russe?"

"Well now, ma'am, you see Charlotte Rushe is the only thing I can't make. My hand ain't good at Charlotte, somehow; but I can make Italian creams, and French creams, and syllabubs, and souffles, and everything you can mention, ma'am, but Charlotte; I ain't good at Charlotte. What wages do you give?"

"Two dollars and a half a week," I replied.

"Well, I have lived out for two dollars and a half a week; but I mostly have been getting three dollars, ma'am. You see I'm a professed cook, and can do everything."

"We need not talk further of it, then, Margaret; I shall not pay more than two dollars and a half a week."

"Well, ma'am, as I like you, I wouldn't let fifty cents a week part friends; I'll take two and a half, but I give you my word of honor, ma'am, that I have an offer at Dr. Howell's, down the street, at eleven dollars a month. Mrs. Howell said she had never paid more than ten dollars; but the doctor, he said he liked my face, ma'am, so he said that he would give me eleven dollars if I'd go; but still fifty cents shan't part us, ma'am. What's your name, ma'am? I don't think I rightly heard it."

"Newton," I answered, much amused.

"Newton! Oh! yis, I've heard of it; it's a very respectable name indeed; a very good family, ma'am!"

"But you have not told me yet, Margaret, where you have been living; I am not willing to take a cook without a recommendation."

"Oh! here's a bit of paper, ma'am, that I got from Mrs. Wilson, where I lived last—a kind of recommend, you see—for when——"

"That will not answer. I never take a servant from a written recommendation; I must see some one with whom she has lived."

"I intirely approve of it, ma'am, intirely; besides, it's not fashionable now to have written characters, I believe."

I was getting desperate. "Where does Mrs. Wilson live?" I asked.

"Oh! she's moved. She lives on —— street, on the right hand side of the way; only a moderate sized house, but you'll find it nately furnished. You don't think we could strike a bargain now, do you? I would come and stay a week, and you could try me, and in the mane time you could inquire my character, and if we didn't suit each other, why no harm done."

I was breathless with all this volubility: so, opening the door, I told her to call the next day, at noon, for her answer.

She had gone half way down the hall, when she turned and asked,

"Have you stationary wash-tubs, ma'am?"

"No."

"Not stationary wash-tubs? That's strange; there's always stationary wash-tubs in the first families. I suppose you've a range, and hot and cold water pipes in the kitchen?"

"Yes."

"Well, ma'am, could I see the kitchen? I always like to see a kitchen before I engage to go to a place."

"It will be time enough for that when I make up my mind that you will suit me," I answered, walking resolutely to the front door.

Nothing but the fear of my friends coming and finding me without a cook would have induced me even to inquire into Margaret's character. The mistress of the "moderate sized house, nately furnished," gave her a sufficiently

good reputation to make me willing to take her on trial. She had been installed in the kitchen but a few hours, when I was sent for, and found all the pots, and kettles, and, in fact, every kind of cooking utensil, out in the middle of the floor.

"I'm very particular, ma'am," she began, "about the things I cook with. You'll have to get me another sort of a tin kitchen; I can't roast with this up and down thing at all."

(My last cook had discarded the old-fashioned tin kitchen for an upright one to fit the range.)

"And this beef-steak broiler, why it ain't fit to cook with in a gentleman's family."

So she went over nearly every kitchen article before her, sometimes condescending to praise a thing very faintly, or saying that perhaps she could make it do, but requiring me to spend twenty dollars for new articles.

Of course I waited for the first dinner, with much anxiety, and I need hardly say that it was a failure.

The soup had a very French look, to be sure, for it was thin and black, but utterly insipid; the potatoes came on in fancy pyramids, but were heavy and cold; the cranberries, beautifully moulded, were burnt; and the meat scarcely warmed through. However, I consoled myself by thinking that perhaps the dessert might prove more successful. But alas! the pastry was as tough as leather, and the custard like water.

I worried through a week with my "professed cook," but at the end of it we all had dyspepsia, and my store-closet was not nearly so well filled as when she came. It may be that professed cooks require more articles to get up their meals with, are naturally more extravagant than others, but I suspect that Margaret had sisters and friends, to whom she was benevolent at my expense, so I dismissed her, and I am sure that I shall never again have the temerity to try a PROFESSED COOK.

AUNT MARGARET'S STORY.

BY EMILIE GRAHAM.

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AUNT MARGARET'S STORY.

BY EMILIE GRAHAM.

"We were two sisters of one race,
She was the fairest in the face.
The wind is sounding in turret and tree."

DEAR aunt Margaret! Of all the friends I have ever had, she was the wisest, kindest, best; of all the human beings I have ever known, the most refreshing and elevating companion. There was in the moral atmosphere about her something pure and pleasant as the breath of pines, and the simplest thing she said or did had a peculiar charm, the charm of perfect naturalness and truth, which—alas for us exiled from paradise!—is the rarest in the world.

When I first remember aunt Margaret, she was an established old maid, but it seemed as if all her nature were so steeped in morning dew, that time could never wither one leaf of thought or feeling, nor dim its wonderful freshness. She was my father's sister, and I, an orphan girl, found in her house a happy home. She was to me father and mother, brother, sister, and friend; and now, when I look back upon the years which I spent with her, they shine out like one long, cloudless summer's day. We dwelt in a rambling farm house, surrounded by orchards and fields, for my aunt was native to a country life, and found a pleasure in all its simple details, of which the inhabitants of cities have no conception. She was also a great reader, and as there was scarcely a subject which had not its place in the large circle of her tastes and sympathies, her well filled library was a never-ending source of delight to me, a delight which was doubled when her occupations permitted my reading aloud to my aunt, whose comments were often more interesting than the text.

One day, we received from a friend in town, a curious volume, a newly published translation from the German, treating of the superstitions of various nations, and of the authenticated facts upon which they are based. It came just in time for our afternoon reading, and I cut the leaves and began at once.

Aunt Margaret was unusually silent, and when I had concluded the first chapter, I asked, for the sake of drawing from her some remark,

"Did you ever see a ghost, aunt Maggy?"

I raised my eyes to her face as I spoke, and was amazed at the effect of my words. She flushed painfully, and her hands, busy with some

knitting work, trembled, but she replied in her usual sweet and serene voice,

"Yes, love, I believe I have."

Her evident emotion stayed the expression of surprise which rose to my lips, and, from a feeling of delicacy, I resumed my reading. I was soon, however, forced to lay it aside by the fast gathering shades of evening, and, resting my arms on the broad window-sill, I gazed out thoughtfully upon the beauty of the summer night. After a long silence, my aunt, who had left her seat, and was standing by my side, repeated, as if to herself, "Then stars arose, and the night was holy!" I pressed my cheek caressingly on the kind hand that rested on my shoulder, but did not speak. Presently she resumed, addressing herself to me,

"I have thought more than once, my child, that it would do us both good if I were to relate to you my past history. I am your nearest relative and friend—although I hope I may not always be so—and you are my only remaining earthly treasure. You are old enough and wise enough to understand things, which, although they are out of the range of your actual experience, lie as possibilities in the heart of every true woman. I think you have a sort of right to my confidence, and I believe I shall feel comfort after I have opened my heart to you."

She paused, as if to collect her thoughts, and then, taking the chair I had placed for her, proceeded,

"I, like you, was left an orphan in my youth, an orphan, and poor, for the property which is now mine had at that time passed unjustly into other hands, and was only restored to me after long and expensive law suits. Your father was a mere lad, and far from giving me any protection or pecuniary assistance, was a constant source of anxiety to me; but—why should I delay to speak the word?—I had a sister."

I could not avoid a slight start at this disclosure, for I had always supposed my father and aunt Margaret to be the only children of their parents. Too much absorbed in her recital to observe my involuntary expression of surprise, my aunt continued,

"At the time when our father's death cast us upon the world, she was but sixteen, while I had entered my twenty-first year, and day is not more different from night than were we two sisters from each other. I possessed no peculiar talent, and in appearance was less attractive than most girls of my age; while she was beautiful exceedingly, and gifted beyond the common lot of mortals. Left motherless, poor lamb! before she was old enough to feel her loss, (our mother died at your father's birth,) she had always been our pet and darling, our pearl of price, and my father's last words to me were, 'Take care of Maud,' for it seemed as natural to stand between her and the rough world, as to shelter some rich exotic from the blasts of winter. If I could only picture her to you! but every attempt to do so in words must be vain. Extreme delicacy, mental and physical, was perhaps her leading characteristic; not the delicacy of weakness, for she was overflowing with health and buoyancy, vivacious and graceful as a little child. The very fineness of her organization, however, rendered her peculiarly susceptible to depressing influences, and, from early childhood, her gay spirits had alternated with occasional fits of melancholy; when her tremulous mouth, and the tears standing in her great blue eyes, filled us with an anxiety which almost amounted to the presumptuous feeling that God, having created so tender a soul, should by an especial Providence, shield it from pain, the common lot of humanity. But His ways are not as our ways.

"She had returned our father's indulgent love with the most admiring and extravagant devotion, and the effect upon her of his sudden death was terrible. I feared she would lose her mind altogether, and my own grief was almost swallowed up in my care for her. The shelter of more than one home was offered us by old friends, but an incentive even more powerful than the honest pride of independence induced me to reject these offers, and to enter at once upon the new path which poverty opened before us. Maud must, at all costs, be roused from the state into which she had fallen; so, the very night after our father's remains were carried to their last resting-place, I said to her, kissing her closed lids, from beneath which tears were streaming,

"'Maud, my darling, listen to me. In a few days we shall be turned out of the house where we were born, without one shilling we can call our own. Mrs. Egerton urges me to make her house our home, and she will be kind as a mother. What shall we do? Shall our father's daughters live upon charity, or shall they do

honor to his name by working for their daily bread?'

"Her convulsive sobs here burst out afresh, and, choking down my own tears, I waited with outward composure until her paroxysm of grief had subsided, and the faint voice whispered,

"'I am listening. Go on.'

"Then I unfolded quietly the particulars of the plan which I had formed. It was to remove immediately to lodgings in town, and to open a small school. I was sure we should meet with success, for our father had spared neither expense nor pains in our education. Maud's fine musical talents had been carefully cultivated, and our circle of friends was large enough to ensure us immediate patronage. I urged upon Maud the necessity of keeping our brother George at school, and endeavored to make her feel how important to us her own exertions would be. She raised herself on her elbow, and, resting her wan cheek on her hand, listened attentively. When I had concluded, she threw her arms round my neck, saying,

"'Dear, good Maggy! Yes, we will work. I have been very wicked and selfish. We will do all you say.'

"Somewhat of the peace that passeth understanding is always the immediate fruit of a good resolution, and I think it was under its calming influence that Maud soon dropped asleep, and rested as she had not done since our father's death. The morning found her refreshed and strengthened, and she assisted me in my preparations for our removal, with a composure which I had scarcely hoped to see.

"Once established in our new quarters, we put our hands to the plough with hearty good will, and an abundant harvest rewarded our efforts. The healthful stimulus of labor, aided by that happy elasticity which is generally triumphant over the sorrows of youth, gradually restored the bloom to Maud's fair cheek, and the silvery ring to her voice, although her face still kept a shade of thoughtfulness it had not worn before.

"We were very busy, though not overworked, and very happy, in those days. It was impossible to feel ourselves lonely or unprotected, for not only was the most active and constant kindness extended to us by old friends of my father, but Maud's pure beauty, and her graceful, winning ways won the hearts of all whom she approached. Mrs. Egerton, who, among all our acquaintances, was the most unremitting in her attentions, had been a schoolmate of my mother, and was the widow of my father's eldest and dearest friend. She was the kindest of old

ladies; so ready with her offers of advice and assistance to all whom she imagined to stand in need of them, that an ill-natured critic might have called her officious; but we, who understood and loved her, saw in her peculiarities only a sincere desire to make every one about her happy. She was an active supporter of our school, and superintended all our little arrangements with the delight of a busy child. Our refusal of her generous proposition to adopt us as her own children sorely disappointed, and almost offended her; but she was one of those good souls whose ill feelings are so shallow that they evaporate utterly in the act of expressing them.

"She had no daughters, and but one son, Frank, who, inheriting his father's talents, also followed his profession of the law. Although he had but just entered his twenty-fifth year, my father, when he felt his end approaching, sent for Frank Egerton, and entrusted to him the management of his affairs; for notwithstanding that he was usually little disposed to put confidence in young and inexperienced men, he made Frank an exception to all such general rules, and indeed seemed to feel almost as much pride in the son of his old friend as if he had been his own. I sometimes thought he cherished a secret wish that Egerton might become the nearest earthly protector of our darling Maud, but he was not one to betray such a desire, and it may not have existed, except in my own fancy. I have already said, I believe, that Frank possessed talents of no common order, but so paramount to every other was the impression made by the force, breadth, and princely nobleness of his character, that in thinking of him one forgot his intellectual gifts. In his invigorating presence, all virtue seemed natural and easy, for although his moral standard was higher and more strict than that of any man whom I have ever known, he appeared to live up to it almost without an effort; and it was with an absolute freedom from egotism, and a grand unconsciousness of anything unreasonable in his demands, that he exacted from all about him the same singleness of purpose and purity of heart with which he was himself endowed.

"The conscientious sternness of his character would have been terrible, had it not been relieved by a depth of tenderness and sensitive feeling never found in any but just such strong natures, and also by a fine vein of hearty humor, which found frequent expression in a merry and irresistibly contagious laugh. He could scarcely have been called handsome, still in every line of his athletic form and animated face, there was

an union of strength and refinement, which rendered his appearance as agreeable as it was striking.

"The sound of his elastic step and cheerful voice, whose every deep vibration was rife with physical and mental health, was always welcome to us both. But if it brightened the delicate rose upon Maud's cheek, and the light within her eyes, so did every passing thought or emotion; for the 'Aurora, flushing in the northern night,' is not more fluctuating in brilliancy and color than was her beautiful face. There was no shadow of embarrassment, nothing hidden or shy in her manner toward him. If he had been her brother, she could not have been more open and simply happy in her intercourse with him. That he loved her, or would learn to love her, I scarcely entertained a doubt. How could he fail to do so? But I was sure that she cherished for him only the regard of a sister. Still, she was very young, almost childish, and as she developed in mind and heart, the character of her feelings might change, I thought.

"When they sang together, she was plainly absorbed in the music, and looked upon him, for the time, only as an instrument for its production. When they read together, she threw herself entirely into the book or the discussions it called forth; and during our walks and drives with him, she was all eye and ear for every beauty in the heavens above and the earth beneath; while he never forgot her in these things, nor indeed in anything, but acted with delicate and thoughtful care for her comfort and happiness. God knows how my heart ached with gratitude toward him for his unflagging and considerate kindness to her during the first few months after our father's death, and I sometimes almost blamed her for seeming to appreciate it so little. With his mother she was a great favorite, and Mrs. Egerton had no reason to complain of coldness in return, for Maud loved her sincerely, and was never happier than when passing some holiday at their house, which was two miles out of town, listening to the dear old lady's rambling talk, or assisting her in the garden or the poultry yard.

"Thus the days rolled on. A summer had passed, and a winter, and spring was bursting its fragrant buds, when, one afternoon, at a rather unusual hour, Frank entered our little sitting-room.

"I have not come too early? Your day's work is done?" he asked.

"School is just dismissed, and we have nothing more important to do, just now, than to entertain you. I cannot exactly say that my

day's work is done though, for I have that small mountain of exercises to correct this evening,' I replied, pointing to a pile of papers on the table beside me.

"He seated himself, and turned them over, absently. He looked pale, and I rather perceived than saw an unwonted nervousness about him. Presently he said, quietly,

"I have news to-day from India. My uncle Sanford is dead, and has left me a small property, enough to render me an independent man."

"Maud clapped her hands.

"Oh! that is good!" she cried.

"Frank looked at her with an amused smile.

"Good for my uncle, or for me?"

"For both, I hope," she answered, laughing gayly. "You never knew your uncle, so you cannot be grieved at his loss, and he was so old, I am sure he could not have any pleasure in life. What is the use of living when one is old and miserable?"

"I know an old lady whose life you can render tolerable for one evening at least, by passing it with her," said he. "My mother has been longing for you ever since the arrival of the mail. She wants to consult your taste and wisdom concerning various improvements about her dairy and hen-coops, which this new access of fortune immediately suggested to her. Will you go?"

"He addressed himself to Maud, and she looked hesitatingly toward me.

"Certainly she will go," I answered, promptly for her.

"I was never a touchy person, and yet I felt hurt at being so deliberately set aside, and was also provokingly conscious of a certain dryness in my tone, and a heightened color very likely to betray me to watchful eyes. Frank's were fixed full on my face, and he said, coolly,

"You have a mountain of exercises to correct, which will occupy you all the evening," and then added, "I have business which will bring me into town again, and, with your permission, I will call and help you."

"There was such a depth of reassuring kindness in his voice, that it was easy to look up with a smile and to say, 'Thank you.'

"In a few minutes I was left alone, and, as I stood at the window, watching my sister's light figure, and the stalwart form of her companion, until they passed out of sight, the thought of what a handsome couple they would make forced itself upon me, and I wondered why Frank seemed so disturbed by his new fortune, and whether his disquiet had anything to do with Maud. Dismissing these idle thoughts, I

returned to my seat, and entered upon the task before me.

"I had not been very long so occupied when the door opened, and Frank re-entered the room. He drew a chair to the table immediately, and proceeded in silence to correct page after page. Presently he observed,

"Your girls improve."

"Yes," I replied: and not another word passed between us for the next half hour, at the close of which the exercises were completed and laid aside. He pushed back his chair, and, leaning forward, rested his arms upon his knees. His eyes were fixed upon the floor, while an irresistible attraction drew mine to his pale face.

"Margaret," he said.

"I would have spoken, but a sickening sense of suffocation stopped the voice in my throat. 'He is going to ask me for my Maud,' I thought.

"Margaret," he repeated, "yesterday I was a poor man, and would not ask any friend to share my poverty with me—still I was rich in hope and courage. To-day both seem to have deserted me. Is the wealth I have coveted for one sole sake, to make me rich indeed, or to rob me of a hope which has grown to be the light of my existence? Tell me."

"He raised his head, and looked me in the face as if he would read my very soul. With a great effort I controlled myself to speak, and my own voice sounded strange in my ears,

"She must answer you. You have my consent."

"She!—who?" and as I failed to reply, he repeated,

"Who?—who must answer me? In heaven's name, what do you mean?"

"Nay, what do you mean? Pardon me! Indeed I do not understand you."

"Not understand me? You do not understand me! Is my love so utterly lost upon you that you cannot even understand it? Have I not spoken plainly? Do you not understand me when I tell you that I love you with a love which has grown with my growth, and strengthened with my strength, till it has become part and parcel of my very being? Why are you so white, and your hands so deathly cold? What ails you, Margaret? Have I, during these years, when I dared not speak, concealed my love so successfully that you cannot now believe in its existence? Or is it that you fear to tell the truth, and crush my hopes forever? Fear not. I can bear certainty, however bitter, like a man. I can bear anything but this strange mystery and suspense. Speak to me, Margaret!"

"Maud—" I began, but my voice failed me.

"What of Maud? Do you doubt I will be faithful to the charge? Have I not always cared for her as if she were my own sister? If I have been remiss, tell me so, and the future shall make amends for the past."

"You have been perfect in your kindness," I replied, "and I have mistaken its character. I thought you loved her, and had come to ask her hand to-night."

"Great heaven!—and she?"

"Oh!" I replied, hastily; "dismiss every such fear from your mind. I am certain, absolutely certain, that no thought which can disturb you has ever entered her innocent young heart. She looks upon you as a friend and brother only."

"Thank God!" he said, heaving a sigh of great relief. "Thank God!"

"Full of cheer and comfort to us both was all the talk that followed; and when he left me, I felt as if the misunderstanding of an hour ago had existed in some remote period of time, and I had been for years his promised wife. Feeling much nervous exhaustion from the great revulsion of feeling through which I had passed, I retired at once to my room, and, drawing back the curtains for the admission of such light as stars and a young moon afforded, throw myself across the bed to await Maud's return. It was then a few minutes past nine o'clock, and as Frank was to be her escort, I could not look for her in less than an hour. I knew that she would come, for she never passed the night away from me, and Frank had besides promised to bring her home without delay.

"Closing my eyes, I reviewed the hard, actual past, which nothing now could change, and filled the future with airy, fluctuating dreams. I should have been happy, and yet I was not. A warning sense of unreality weighed upon me like a nightmare, and I became intensely impatient to hear the sound of Maud's step and voice upon the stair. I longed unutterably for her loving sympathy, and the touch of her warm, soft lips. The hour passed, and I had heard the old town clock tell eleven with a drowsy, lagging stroke, when I fell into an uneasy doze. I must have lain in this state for a considerable length of time, when I was roused by my own voice calling passionately, 'Maud! Maud!' I sat bolt upright, my pulses bounding with terror, and there, before me, in the faint moonlight, she stood. Her long, fair hair was all unbound, and streaming with water; her dress streamed with water, too, and as she stood there, in horrible silence, wringing her white hands, I distinctly heard it drop upon the floor. It seemed as if I never should have moved, but she held out her arms to me. With

a cry, I sprang to clasp her to my breast, and, clasping the air, stood there alone in the very spot which her form had just occupied. Pressing both hands to my head, I gazed about me stupidly. Yes! I was alone. Winged with fear, I fled through the town, and up the lonely road over which she should have passed. The hollow tramp of my feet upon the little bridge which spanned one end of a tiny lake, a mere pool, deep and clear, by whose margin we had often strayed together, arrested me, and I paused. Trees overhung it upon every side, but the thin foliage of early spring cast no shadow. Not a living thing was within the range of my vision. I listened; only the beating of my own heart, and the low gurgle of the water, lapping about the supports of the bridge, met my ear. I looked down upon the smooth, black surface, but if anything lay beneath which should not be there, it was well hidden. Shuddering, I sped on swiftly as before, nor stopped for breath till I reached the threshold of Mrs. Egerton's house. I leaned, panting, against the door for a few moments, and then knocked. Steps descended the stair, and Frank opened to me. I did not give him time to speak, but grasping his arm with both my hands, shrieked, 'Maud! where is she?'

"Come in, Margaret," he said, and drew me into the house.

"No! I will not sit! Answer me! What have you done with my sister? Where is Maud?"

"I took her home two hours ago, and saw her ascend the porch steps, and enter, as I supposed, by the side door. Were you not at home? Have you not seen her?"

"Yes! I have seen her, but not in her earthly form. She is dead! drowned!—drowned! Come quick!" I cried, struggling wildly to draw him to the door. "We must drag the pool—come!"

"Margaret!—my wife!" he murmured, and held me firmly in his arms. I saw his thought, and, as by magic, a sudden calmness fell upon me.

"I am not mad, Frank Egerton," I said; "I saw my sister, Maud, leave the house with you this afternoon at six o'clock. With mortal eyes I have not seen her since, and shall never see her again. I tell you she is dead—drowned. Go, drag the pool, by the bridge, and you will find my words are true."

"Will you not go in to my mother," he asked, tenderly, "and await my return?"

"Yes," I answered, sighing wearily, "I will do anything you like," and, supported by his arm, I approached his mother's room. Before entering, I inquired whether there had been anything unusual in Maud's appearance or manner during her walk home.

"Nothing unusual for her," he said; "she was silent, very silent, but not more so than I have frequently seen her."

"Did you tell her—"

"Of our engagement? Yes, just before we parted at your gate, I told her. She made no remark at all, but bid me good night in her usual voice."

"Mrs. Egerton was in bed, and there was a dim night lamp burning in the room.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Frank answered for me.

"It seems that when I left Maud at her own door, she did not enter, as I supposed, but went elsewhere. Margaret became alarmed, and has come here alone. I have brought her to you to be taken care of while I go to seek for Maud. Do not rise, mother; I will make Margaret comfortable here on the lounge, and you must not expect her to talk, for she is very tired."

"I yielded myself passively to his control, while he laid me on the sofa, and covered me with a shawl. He kissed my forehead, as he stooped over me, whispering some endearing words; but my senses were dull, I heard him as in a dream.

"Now, my dear," said Mrs. Egerton, when he was gone, "I do not want you to talk at all, but just to make yourself as comfortable as you can. I do not wonder that you feel a little uneasy at Maud's running away in that strange manner, but I can tell you something which will explain the matter quite satisfactorily—that is, if you will not repeat what I say to Frank, for he is so peculiar, you know, my dear, and has such high idea of honor, and all that sort of thing, that I am afraid he would feel hurt with me. Are you listening? but don't answer me; you must not talk, you know."

"I am listening," I replied.

"Very well, then, I will tell you about it, only you must not talk any more. Where was I? Oh, yes! I remember. Well, as I was saying, my Frank is so peculiar, and does not like to be interfered with. He is exactly like his father—you have no idea how much he is like his father. His father was just such another reserved, fastidious fellow as Frank, and just as particular about offering himself to a woman before he was able to support her. I knew very well that Frank would never come to the point until he had laid by money, and I thought it was a pity, because with his fine talents, and Maud's good sense, he could not fail to make his way in the world; besides, I wanted to see them man and wife before I was laid in my grave. But, whenever I approached the subject

of marriage, he set it aside with that quiet, unanswerable way of his, so like his father's, and I did not dare to press the matter, or even to mention Maud's name, although it was plain to see how well he loved her. As for her, little puss! it was not from indifference she would sit for hours at my feet, with her head bent down over her work, and the color coming and going in her pretty face, while I talked to her of Frank, and told her all the history of his childhood. She never wearied of the same old tales, day after day, but listened as if they were something quite new. When this new fortune came yesterday, I could not resist saying to Frank, "Now you will bring me home a daughter?" He did not answer a word, but I judged by the color of his face, and his way of looking, that I was not far wrong. I was so pleased, you cannot think. I felt that I must take Maud into my arms at once, and so I sent for her. Not that I had the faintest idea of saying anything to her; that only came, of itself, afterward, and is just what I do not want you to repeat to Frank. When he left her with me, and went again into town, I understood directly that he had gone to you, as Maud's only natural protector, to ask your permission to speak to her on her way home that night, and I felt so worked up I could not contain myself, nor sit still. I should not have spoken though, if she had not put her arms about my neck, and begged, so sweetly, to know my trouble, that she might comfort me. It was impossible to say her nay. I bid her call me mother, and told her all the truth. At first I was frightened, she sobbed so convulsively. But after, as she sat upon my lap, with her head drooping like a flower, all pale and drenched with rain, I was glad I had prepared her to meet his proposals with dignity, as a woman should, for I saw that a new life had entered into her. I besought her again to call me mother. She looked up, and her lips parted with a smile. Her face was like an angel's, transparent, and full of light. 'Mother,' she said, and blushed red as a rose. I brought her to my room; and bathed her eyes, and then sent her out into the fresh air to regain her composure before Frank's return. But she is such a delicate, timid little thing, and when he came, I could see the very soul flicker and tremble within her like a flame in the wind. You see, Margaret, my dear, it is not at all to be wondered at that she feared meeting you, she is so shy, and would naturally dread the first talk. I think I can just see her standing, with her hand on the latch of the door, after parting with Frank, unable to make up her

mind to go in, and then running away again, perhaps to old Katy's, or to the parsonage, or to Dr. Gray's house, with some pretty excuse for passing the night there.' And the old lady laughed at her own pleasant fancy.

"Each separate word fell on my brain like a drop of molten lead. A hand was at my throat, strangling me. It was my own, but I did not know it. I leaped to my feet for breath, and fell heavily forward into the lap of a blessed oblivion.

"Weeks followed, which were to me a blank, and to those around me a ceaseless day and night watch over a lingerer between life and death. At last, weak as a new-born child, I opened my eyes to conscious wakefulness, but not to a recollection of the past. Before me, by the half shaded window, Frank sat reading, pale, thin, and ten years older than when I saw him last, but I gazed at him with no emotion, except one of vague wonder. I made an effort to move, which drew his attention, and he came and leaned over me. I looked up in his changed face, and asked faintly, 'Where am I? Where is Maud?'

"You have been ill. You must not talk, and you will soon be better. Drink this,' and he raised me in his arms and put a glass to my lips.

"I drank. He laid me down again, and I fell asleep.

"As my health gradually returned, under Mrs. Egerton's indefatigable care, memory revived, with all its painful details; but Maud's name was never mentioned, nor the events of the past alluded to by either one of us, and months elapsed before I learned that her body had been found, and the last rites paid to it during my illness. Frank remained at home till I was able to move about the house without assistance, and then made preparations for his voyage to India, whither he was going to take possession of the property left him by his uncle. A few days before his departure I sat with him alone, by the library window, and my hand lay passively in his. He had been talking of indifferent matters connected with his journey, when timidly, and in a voice that was tremulous and husky, he spoke of the future, once more calling me his 'wife.' My mind had not recovered its tone, I was like one only half sane, and the bare thought of marrying him seemed to make me my sister's willful murderer. I withdrew my hand from his clasp, and silently shook my head. Too well he understood me! The shadow of a terrible anguish settled upon his face. I could not bear to see it. I rose and left the room.

"From that moment he troubled me with no more tenderness. Considerate, gentle, and attentive as ever, he still neither sought nor avoided me, but the shadow never left his noble face. I was glad when the time came for him to go, so intolerable was the pain that I endured. He went. Weak and weary, I sought refuge in forgetfulness—in vain! A craving restlessness possessed me, and drove me forth to wander alone through fields and woods. When I could walk no longer, I lay down upon the grass, and was often out all day. If the walls of a city had pent me in, I believe I should have died; but potent is the balm Nature distills into every suffering heart that comes to her for aid. My constitution was naturally vigorous, and its resources turned to good account the constant air and exercise to which a restless spirit exposed me. My bodily health began steadily to improve, and with it my health of mind. A conviction grew upon me that I had done, and was doing a great wrong—that I had no right thus to blast the earthly future of my friend, or wantonly to cast away the blessing which God had given me, in the love of a faithful heart. I resolved to write to Frank at once, and tell him all the truth. The next mail that went out, bore my letter to him, and something like repose visited me once more.

"How I longed for his reply! It came, pure and peaceful as a breath from heaven, and with it the promise of his speedy return. 'We might look for him,' he said, 'in a week or ten days after his letter reached us.' The ten days passed, and we looked for him, but he did not come.

"The ten days grew to twenty, and brought no vessel, nor any news of her. News came, at last; the vessel, never. She had gone down with every soul on board. I was too well schooled in grief to sink under this last blow. The new sorrow took its place among the rest, in my heart, naturally and calmly.

"I had now an opportunity to return the devoted attentions which Mrs. Egerton had so lately lavished upon me. The sudden shock was followed by a paralytic stroke, which for many days endangered her life, and left her afterward helpless and almost childish. During five years I tended her with a daughter's love, and received in return a lesson of cheerful, patient resignation, which, I trust, I never shall forget. One morning I went, as was my custom, early to her bedside to learn how she had passed the night. I saw, without asking, that she had passed it well, and the morning indeed dawned brightly upon her. Another angel had spread its wings for flight.

“One more earthly tie, your father, still remained to me. He was at college. Two years after Mrs. Egerton’s death, I returned to the old home again, which had lately been restored to me, and here I have been from that time till now.

“Your father passed his holidays with me,

looking upon this as his home, until he married his pretty, foreign wife, and went, with her, to practice his profession in London. The rest you know, my little girl. I hope I have not saddened you, my child. Pain is the common lot of all, but, rightly borne, becomes the root of an eternal joy.” *

HOW PRUDENCE OVERREACHED ITSELF.: CHAPTER I.

BY CATHARINE R. SILLIAM.

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HOW PRUDENCE OVERREACHED ITSELF.

BY CATHARINE R. SILLIAM.

CHAPTER I.

MR. JACOB HOLLISTER was a bachelor of forty-five. Now when gentlemen have reached that age without taking on themselves the yoke matrimonial, the case is generally regarded as desperate; yet neither Mr. Hollister nor his lady acquaintance so viewed it. In the first place, he was still very good-looking; portly, erect, dignified; courteous in manner; unexceptionable in the blackness and glossiness of his attire; and best of all, provided with that charm, which, taking everything into consideration, is best adapted to win and retain the affections of maid or widow—a full purse, whose contents he dispensed with liberal hand. No wonder the semi-nine population of Baldwin were very, very loth to relinquish hope of him. On his own part, Mr. Hollister by no means purposed going to the end of his days in a state of single blessedness. When a young man, beginning the world with nothing, he had deferred the thought of marriage till he should be able to keep a wife in comfort; and when that time arrived he had become so prudent, so fearful of being duped, that he hesitated to commit himself. He was much in ladies' society, and very welcome there; occasionally he devoted himself to some fair one in particular, but the faintest jest on the subject, the least shadow of a hint that his attentions were noticed, and lo! he was off at the antipodes. For the rest, Mr. Hollister was perfectly good-tempered, though rather severe in his judgment of some matters; a little too much disposed, thought his best friends, to make his own opinion the law for others; a trifle too prompt and lavish in offering advice which nobody wanted to hear. But he was honest and honorable; a true Christian, a most thorough friend; and none doubted that his wife, when he should choose one, would be a very happy woman.

At last, however, his attention was caught by

one whom all regarded as likely to bring him to the point, and make him a joyful Benedict. Miss Sarah Norris, for such was her name, was a pretty, gentle-looking girl of twenty-three or four; she dressed with good taste, was amiable in disposition, and neat in habits; moreover, she belonged to the same church with our friend, and made herself very useful in the Sunday School, the choir, and all "society" matters. "Just the woman for him," said every one, except those who wanted him for themselves; and for a time it seemed as if Mr. Hollister thought so too. He talked much with Miss Norris at parties, he called frequently at her father's house; he drove her out in that sweet little carriage, which was the admiration of all Baldwin. But suddenly his attention slackened; he scarcely saw Miss Norris except by accident; he took Catharine Carter and Loo Simmons out to ride; and gossip was on the *qui vive* to know what could possibly be the matter. Poor Sarah, too, had her own sad surmises as to the cause of such singular conduct; she had allowed a very kind feeling toward the recreant Jacob to take possession of her gentle little heart; and it pained her beyond measure to find herself thus deserted without fault or explanation. But, of course, she was powerless to remedy the evil; she could only hope and wait.

Now Mr. Hollister had a friend, a young man, some twenty years his junior, for whose opinion and advice he had a great esteem; and this friend having recently perpetrated matrimony on his own score, and finding his account therein, was naturally anxious to place his friend in the enjoyment of the same happiness as himself. He had frequently remonstrated and advised, but now he took the liberty to rebuke.

"I can tell you one thing, Jacob," he said, "the way you are treating Sarah Norris is a little too bad for anything. If it were done by

a regular flirt like John Backers, or Peter Van Schoonhoven, it would be all in character; but for you, a man of your age, a man of religious principle, the fact is, it's shameful!"

Mr. Hollister blushed like a maid of seventeen. "Why, Hobart," said he, "seems to me you are rather severe! I am sure I wish Miss Norris every happiness. I would do anything in the world for her."

"Except marry her, which is the only thing you are wanted to do."

Mr. Hollister's blushes became more crimson. "Marry her!" he repeated; "I don't know that she would have me."

"And what business have you to know till you have asked her? Do you suppose I knew when I spoke to Helen? I can tell you I expected nothing short of a downright refusal; but she took me, and you see for yourself how happy we are! And you may do just the same, if you like; she has given you all the encouragement consistent with delicacy. I am not her confidant, of course, but I believe the game is in your own hands, and I say, Go in and win!"

Mr. Hollister did not at once respond to the friendly outburst. His words, when he *did* speak, were of rather a deprecatory nature.

"You see, Hobart," he observed, "I don't feel entirely certain of her character; she seems amiable, to be sure, but then I can't tell how she may be when there is nobody by. Then she always looks neat, but, whenever I see her, she is either in company, or might reasonably be expecting it. I can't secrete myself in the house, and see how she behaves with her mother and the children, or how she dresses at breakfast; and how am I to know?"

"How, indeed?" said Hobart. "The truth is, Mr. Jacob Hollister, you are a little too exacting in your demands. Your wife must be pretty."

"Well, yes. I am a great admirer of beauty."

"And young—because you're so juvenile that she wouldn't be suitable otherwise—and stylish. I put it to you if it isn't so?"

"It's true. I do like to see a woman that's well dressed. There is something so proper—so—so—agreeable about it."

"And then she must be amiable, economical, and pious."

"Oh! certainly. I couldn't possibly do without those qualifications."

"Now Sarah Norris has all these gifts. I must conclude, then, Hollister, that there is one thing more which you have never named, and yet consider requisite. She must be rich; yes, my friend, you are a fortune-hunter!"

"No, no!" cried the bachelor; "you do me wrong. If she has expensive habits, of course, I should like her to have something of her own, because my means couldn't afford it."

"Fiddlestick for your not affording it. Why, man, what do you mean to do for her aside from conferring on her the supreme honor of becoming Mrs. Jacob Hollister? give her the privilege of looking after your house and wardrobe? furnish her with goods from the store at cost?

"Don't jest, Hobart; I assure you it is a serious thing to me."

"I wish it were, for then you would do as you ought. No man has a right to place a girl in the position you will put Sarah Norris in if you leave her without saying anything more. Her acceptance of your attentions has already drawn remark upon her; people will say she was willing to have you, but you did not give her the chance. It isn't generous, it isn't fair. If you know your own mind so little, or were so doubtful about her worth, you ought never to have been so attentive to her. Come, Hollister," he continued, "do be persuaded. Lay aside a few of your old-maidish notions, and act like a sensible man. Sarah Norris appears to be all that you wish; and, should she have a few opinions or habits different from yours, her affection will doubtless teach her to conform to your views hereafter; or, if not, you can agree to differ. Helen tells me Sarah talks of going to Chicago to spend the winter; if I were you I would not let her go. Keep her at home and make her consent to have you before Christmas."

Mr. Hollister hesitated; then half promised; then said "he would take the matter into consideration."

A few mornings later found him in Mr. Norris' comfortable parlor. Sarah was looking her very prettiest; her blue eyes were unusually gentle, her fair cheek wore its softest rose. She was very busy with some wonderful tidy in crochet; and, as she sat near the table—now intent on her work; now raising her head and looking at him as she joined in the conversation—he decided in his own mind that she would form a charming piece of furniture for any drawing-room. Imagine, now, that he had purchased that handsome house of old Squire Baldwin's: imagine the large front room, east of the hall, fitted up as their daily parlor, handsome carpet and curtains, sofas, and all that; he could afford to have things handsome, and he would have them. Then fancy Sarah there as mistress; the lamp lit, the curtains drawn; himself not so very far off; her smiles all for him; her

thoughts for him; the picture was delightful! He was almost tempted to run every risk, and offer himself the minute Mrs. Norris should step out of the room, and give him an opportunity of doing so.

But then came up the old doubts; oh! what would he not have given for a clairvoyant power to see whether the foot inside that pretty shoe were just as neat and as pure as it ought to be; whether the attire, not seen, were as cleanly and delicate as what was outwardly visible. How he wanted to know whether the kind, pleasant voice always sounded as gently as it did now to him! Above all, how he wished to be certain what Sarah's answer would be! She had seemed encouraging, but then one never knew; perhaps she was engaged to somebody else all the time. With all his fine qualities, his undoubted piety, our good Mr. Hollister had his share of vanity; he would have liked, as little as anything, to have it known through Baldwin that Miss Norris had rejected him. So he looked, and longed, and lingered, and hesitated, and finally went away without declaring his mind. The next day Sarah set out on her journey to Chicago.

CHAPTER II.

"HOBART," said Mr. Hollister, a few days after, "you can do me a great favor, if you like."

"Well," returned his friend, "speak, and command me."

"Would you be willing, now," said the bachelor, coaxingly, and blushing like the morn—"would you object, that is, to write to Miss Norris?"

"Why, under the heavens, should I write to her? Write yourself, if you want to hear from her. What do you suppose Helen would think?"

"She might see all the letters on both sides. You see, people say that one's real character comes out so in a correspondence; and she wouldn't be on her guard with you as she would with me."

"Mr. Hollister," said Hobart, fixing a severe eye on him, "don't expect me to be a party to any such paltry plan. In this world, sir, we have to walk by faith in other than spiritual matters. How do I know that you are not a pharisaical hypocrite—a devourer of widows' houses? How do I know that all the men I associate with are not thieves and gamblers? I can't go following them around in every act of their lives; if they seem upright and good, I must believe them so, and treat them accord-

ingly. I advise you to do the same thing with your lady love. And just remember that ours are not the days of Methuselah; and, if you spend all your life in making up your mind, you will be in the country where there are no marriages, and your chance will be over."

Poor Mr. Hollister! he sighed and deliberated; he thought often and long of Sarah; sometimes he *almost* wrote, but he never quite made it out. So the winter slid away, and when the spring was well advanced Miss Norris returned. But not quite as she went; there were rumors, talks of special attentions in Chicago; jests about a tall, dark-haired gentleman, &c. Sarah was as discreet as young ladies usually are, and nothing was really known about it. But the rumors reached Mr. Hollister, and decided him at once. Sarah grew doubly valuable now that there was a possibility of losing her. He did not believe the report; she used to treat him so kindly, and he was sure she could not change so much in one winter! But there was nothing to be gained by waiting, and he was certain he preferred her to any woman in the world. So he made an early call on Miss Norris, distinctly proposed, and was as distinctly, though courteously, declined.

Mr. Hollister was aghast! He begged to know the reason—was there any other attachment?

Miss Norris hardly considered that it was a question he had a right to ask; yet, since he wished it, she would inform him. Yes, there was another attachment.

"And you are engaged?—you will be married, Sarah?"

"I hope to be, certainly—some time, it is probable during the next month."

Mr. Hollister forgot all prudence, all caution. "Oh! what a fool I have been!" he cried. "Why didn't I ask you this question the night I was here last fall? Oh! Sarah, I know you liked me then. Tell me, was it not so? Or would your answer have been the same as now?"

Sarah colored, and hesitated. "Perhaps it is as well to be frank with you, Mr. Hollister," she answered. "There was a time when I felt a true regard for you; I thought your manner had authorized it. I thought you showed more interest in me than in any other woman, and I preferred you to any other man. I do not say I loved you, for that would be too strong an expression; but I was sufficiently interested to feel a good deal of sadness when you so suddenly, and as it seemed without reason, ceased your visits and attentions. Of course, were I not now most happily engaged to a man whose

worth I cannot doubt, you would never have known of this; but I think it may do no harm to warn you against such fickleness and vacillation. I trust, if you should be again placed in the same circumstances, you will have more regard for yourself and another than to treat her as you did me."

She spoke hastily and with feeling; and Mr. Hollister was considerably moved. How he regretted those poor habits of caution, so impossible to explain, which had come between him and happiness! But it was too late to help it now, and he left the house a sadder, and, as he thought, a wiser man than he entered it.

The wedding came off in due season, and Mr. Hollister, with other friends, was present. He had made the bride a very handsome gift, and he wished her joy with unusual warmth; but, poor man! he was thinking every time he looked at her, so sweet and graceful in her snowy robes, that, but for his own folly, he might have been in the bridegroom's place; he might have been the one who was to claim in future her cares, her company, her affection. They were mournful meditations truly, but they could not undo the past.

CHAPTER III.

A YEAR passed on, and Mr. Hollister, warned by sad experience, had been shy of ladies' society; particularly cautious about devoting himself to any especial person. But, in the second summer succeeding the marriage of Sarah Norris, a new belle appeared in the Baldwin circles. Miss Anna Chambers dawned on an admiring village. Our friend, always an admirer of the dashing and stylish in woman, was very much captivated at first sight. Miss Chambers was above the ordinary stature, of a full and finely developed form. She had a dark, rich complexion, dazzling teeth, raven hair, and great black eyes, flashing like jewels. Then she dressed beautifully; in excellent, though rather brilliant taste; but that corresponded with the style of her beauty. Her manners were very fascinating: quiet, but easy and graceful. She had always enough to say, but she never fatigued one with liveliness, never made weak or trifling remarks. All the young men were wild about her; even Peter Van Schoonhoven, who had come up from Schenectady for his annual term of ruralizing, and who was the most redoubted flirt in the state, was dragged at her chariot wheels in triumph. But on none did she smile so sweetly and encouragingly as on Mr. Hollister; and the heart of our bachelor was deeply moved. He began to think he had found the

twin soul; and that he was amply paid for all his years of waiting. No thought of caution now; no fears of careless habits, shrewish temper, extravagant tastes. The mere idea of such things in connection with that angel would have been profanation.

Ah! could he have lived but a little while in her native place? Could he have seen her father's house, so illy-ordered, the large family of poorly-tended children, the mother worn-out with labor and care, while her daughter led a life toilless as the liles. Could he have seen the beautiful Anna in her slatternly home-attire, and heard her "snub" her little brothers and sisters, and even her parents, when she was out of temper, as not unfrequently happened! But he could not; and Miss Chambers played her part well. She soon inventoried the worth of her various admirers, and found that with the exception of the gentleman from Schenectady before mentioned, they were all young men with their way to make; and the one exception was too thorough a coquet to be relied upon. Mr. Hollister was undeniably the best card in the pack. Miss Chambers was well up to the world and its wisdom; she was twenty-eight if she was a day, although to look at her fresh and beautiful face you would never have thought it. She felt that it behooved her to lose no time, and she laid close though decorous siege to Mr. Hollister's heart. She was very regular at church, and sometimes attended the "monthly concerts" and the Saturday evening prayer meetings, observing on all these occasions the most becoming gravity and close attention to the services. She regretted that there was no class in Sunday School that she could take during the few weeks of her stay; she praised the society of Baldwin in that it eschewed cards and dancing—of which, she said, she had formerly been fond, but now saw her error. She conversed about various preachers and styles of sermonizing; she was always industriously employed. Yet she was never too busy to lay aside her work and sing for Mr. Hollister's benefit. All misgiving fled from his mind. He knew, indeed, that she was not a "professor," but she was so serious, so religiously disposed, that he was sure that need form no obstacle. He ventured to ask his friend Hobart's opinion, but that gentleman dismissed him rather shortly; he had given his best advice before without result, and Jacob must now "gang his ain gait." It was just as well, for he was too much in love to have heeded any rational opinion. So he declared himself, and was graciously accepted, and Miss Chambers went home to prepare for

her nuptials, feeling that she had done "a good stroke of work." An excellent establishment had been secured by a short campaign, and a very moderate outlay of thought and trouble. Her father's slender purse was taxed to its utmost capacity to provide funds for the approaching occasion, and Miss Chambers reveled amid silks, and feathers, and laces, and ribbons. Soon all was ready, and Mr. Hollister being duly notified came on, and was made the happiest of men. After the bridal trip they came back to Baldwin, and a few weeks were pleasantly occupied in getting settled in their handsome house, receiving and returning calls, attending parties, &c., &c. But after three months had elapsed, the fair bride began to weary of perpetual complaisance, and to think she should enjoy having her own way again.

"Come, Anna, it is time for you to get ready," said Mr. Hollister, one evening. "The bell is ringing."

Mrs. Hollister raised her eyes from the book she was reading.

"I don't intend going out to-night," she replied.

"Not go out, Anna! Why it is our regular prayer meeting."

"Very well; but as I am not a member of the church, I see no occasion that I should attend so constantly; I have been every time before since we came home. And besides, I am in the midst of John Halifax."

Mr. Hollister looked grave. He had, as we have before stated, a love of advising, and could hardly be expected to forego his favorite pastime on this opportune occasion. "I should think, Anna," he remarked, "that you might find some volume more suitable as a preparation for the holy Sabbath now so closely approaching." A pause. "I am astonished. You told me you did not care for novels."

"And I didn't then, you dear, cross creature," she replied, "my mind was entirely taken up with you. Don't frown so savagely, or I shall think you are really angry with me," and she put her beautiful arms round his neck, looked laughingly in his honest blue eyes and kissed him. Jacob was too much a lover yet to resist this tender argument. He went off alone to the meeting, and his wife finished John Halifax at forty-five minutes past eleven.

But things could not go on thus always. Causes of discomfort became too serious to be laughed or kissed away, even if Mrs. Hollister had always been disposed to employ that mode of treatment. But her temper, not good by nature, could not bear opposition and fault-

finding. Sometimes she laughed, it is true, but often she answered sharply.

"Anna," said Jacob, one morning, at breakfast, "how does Bridget make this coffee?"

"I don't know, indeed," she returned, with provoking coolness.

"You ought to know; it is your duty as mistress of the house. The coffee tastes as if it was made from burnt potato skins, and I send home regularly old government Java, which is now at a very high price, and ought not to be wasted in concocting such a vile draught as this. It is my wish, Anna, that you look to this and other household matters; you have no right to neglect them."

"If you intend to make a drudge of me, Mr. Hollister," replied the wife, with spirit, "you will find yourself mistaken. If you wished for a servant you should have married one."

"Not the slightest need of getting in a passion, Anna. I don't exact or expect a servant's part from you—only a wife's. You have two girls in the kitchen to perform all the drudgery. Pray see to them a little; the spoons are nearly black, and the knives look as if they had put on mourning. The biscuit are sour, the meat is overdone, and the table-cloth would be a disgrace to a fifth-rate boarding-house. It was understood, when we married, that there was a mutual compact; I was not to furnish you with everything you wished, and have my own comforts totally neglected in return. I hope I shall not have to speak again on this subject, I trust your own good sense will be enough."

Very good, reasonable words, but uttered, alas! to a "stony ground" hearer. Anna enjoyed luxuries, but she did not care for neatness. The charms of glittering steel and silver, of clean table-cloths, laid square and even, all the folds "straight as a die," were unfelt by her; fresh napkins she was indifferent to; she did not know good bread from poor. It would have needed a great deal of resolution, a great deal of real love for her husband to overcome her native indolence, and change her into a tolerable housekeeper; and these she had not. Poor Jacob had to learn the lesson of endurance.

Her personal habits, too, caused him great annoyance. Beautifully dressed away from home, or when expecting company, she was extremely careless when they were alone. During the earlier years of their marriage, Jacob sometimes ventured to remonstrate. "Anna," he would say, "your hair is not tidy—your stockings are full of holes. It would be very easy to take a little time every week, and look over your stockings and put them in order. And if

you would comb your hair every morning, when you got up, you would feel much more comfortable, besides being really much more to be respected than you are at present." Sometimes Anna laughed, sometimes she sulked, sometimes she "flared up" fiercely; but she never reformed. It was not pleasant to the husband to find how much more other men's opinion was valued than his own; to see the hurried flight up stairs when Mr. Van Schoonhoven called; the quick exchange of the wrapper, with the large grease spot on the front breadth, for the new silk, the Mechlin set, and handsome jewels; he felt that, as he had paid for these things, he had a right to see them put on occasionally for his own gratification. But Mrs. Hollister thought otherwise. Neither did he approve of her manners to young men. Not that he at all feared her bringing discredit on herself or him; but it was not pleasant after he had been receiving all day the benefit of her peevishness or *ennui*, to see her beam forth all gladness, animation, and smiles on every one

that approached. It showed him too clearly how little she respected his opinion or valued his regard.

Poor Mr. Hollister! his punishment was hard. If his friends had not been too sorry for him, they might have laughed over his defeat and disappointment; but they *were* too sorry. They dreaded for awhile lest the petty and vexing trials of home should undermine his religious character; but there he was too firmly fixed. He was constant as ever in duty, and liberal as ever to each good cause. He was a shade less severe, less prone to insist on his own opinion, but that was a change for the better. And the friends who valued and pitied him, could only console themselves with thinking that this life was short; and that in a few years it would be all the same whether his wedded life had been a happy or a thorny one.

This, however, is a view of the case which we would find it easier to adopt for our friends than for ourselves.

MAN-AGE: AN ACTING CHARADE.: CHARACTERS.

BY S. ANNIE FROST

Peterson's Magazine (1849-1892); Jan 1860; VOL. XXXVII., No. 1.; American Periodicals
pg. 87

MAN-AGE: AN ACTING CHARADE.

BY S. ANNIE FROST AUTHOR OF "PARLOR CHARADES AND PROVERBS."

[The acting of charades, in private parlors, has become quite fashionable. The difficulty, however, is to get such characters as require no scenery, and yet are amusing. We have, accordingly, engaged Miss S. A. Frost, who has lately published a successful book of parlor charades, to furnish us with original charades; and we now offer the first of these to our readers.]—EDITORS OF "PETERSON."

CHARACTERS.

Mr. Marston—Kate and Fannie, his daughters—Malcolm Hoyle, Mr. Marston's nephew—Leonard Harding, Fannie's husband.

SCENE I.—MAN.

Scene.—A parlor in Mr. Marston's house.

Curtain rises—Fannie and Kate discovered: Fannie sewing; Kate reading.

FANNIE.—Kate!

KATE.—I am here!

FANNIE.—So I perceive. Put away your book, sister, and come sit beside me. I want to tell you a secret, which has weighed so long upon my mind, that my heart aches with the burden.

KATE.—(Throwing aside her book.)—Why, Fannie, what all you? You are pale, your voice trembles, and (taking Fannie's hand) how cold your hand is! Are you ill?

FANNIE.—No, dear, but I am unhappy.

KATE.—You! Our father's darling; the belle of our society; rich, accomplished, beautifull! You unhappy? Come, sister, you must be ill to fancy such a thing.

FANNIE.—It is not fancy, Kate. But I will not indulge in mysteries; I will tell you all in one word: then, dear Kate, I am married.

KATE.—What! You! Fannie! Who is the victim?

FANNIE.—That remains to be seen! My husband is a man who—

KATE.—Stop! I can't comprehend it all at once! My sister married, and married to a man!

FANNIE.—You did not suppose it was a woman, did you?

KATE.—No, but—oh! dear. What will pa say when he hears Fannie has married a man?

FANNIE.—But he must not hear it. At least not until next week, when I am twenty-one, and may take possession of the property dear mother left me. Now, Katie, listen. Father told me, this morning, that he expected our cousin, Malcolm Hoyle, to visit us, to choose the wife his father ordered him to select, one of us. Father thinks you are too young, and has desired me to receive his attentions. As I am already married this is impossible; but as my husband is the son of father's bitter enemy, Mr. Harding—

KATE.—Paw! you haven't married Leonard Harding? Won't there be a breeze when you tell pa?

FANNIE.—(Sadly.) I fear so! But, Kate, what I want you to do, is to make our student cousin fall in love with your charming self. You remember him?

KATE.—Slightly. A handsome young man, who always closed the study door at the sound of our voices, and looked like a large encyclopedia bound in an old dressing-gown.

FANNIE.—Right. He has declared his intention of remaining a bachelor, but comes here in deference to his father's command, in hopes we will refuse his offers, meaning to make himself most disagreeable. Yet father declares we must encourage even the slightest attentions.

KATE.—Pleasant, truly! Make love to a beau!

MR. MARSTON.—(Behind the scenes.)—Fannie! Fannie!

Enter Mr. Marston.

MR. MARSTON.—Oh! here you are! Now, my dear child,

look your prettiest. You must conquer our modern Timon, and secure one of the wealthiest husbands in the country. Why what a face to meet a lover! Are you ill, my child?

FANNIE.—(Forcing a smile.)—No, dear father, quite well.

MR. MARSTON.—Then cheer up! Come, you have looked sad ever since I told you of my nephew's expected visit. You surely do not dislike him.

KATE.—(Beginning to sob violently.)—Oh! oh! oh!

MR. MARSTON.—Why, Kate, what is the matter?

KATE.—(Still sobbing.)—You don't love me! You d-do-n't ca-a-re for me!

MR. MARSTON.—Not love you! Not care for you! Why, what new freak is this?

KATE.—Why don't you pick out a husband for me?

MR. MARSTON.—You! Why you are barely eighteen! Non-sense, child, nonsense! Go to your room while I have a little serious conversation with your sister. When you are old enough to be married, I'll attend to it!

KATE.—(Going.)—Thank you (aside) for nothing. Exit.

MR. MARSTON.—Fannie, I want to tell you something that grieves me. I was informed, to-day, that you were seen walking with the son of my worst enemy, Leonard Harding. Is this true?

FANNIE.—(Agitated.)—Not to-day! I have not seen him to-day!

MR. MARSTON.—Leonard Harding walking with my child! The very thought annoys me.

FANNIE.—As a neighbor, dear father, I—

MR. MARSTON.—Neighbor or not. I hate him. Do not let this happen again. Hark! I hear a strange voice! It may be your cousin. I must see!

Exit.

FANNIE.—Now all depends upon Kate! If Malcolm fancies Kate, father may forgive me, in the pleasure of securing the fortune for one of his children; if not, I am free next week, and must assert my independence.

Enter Kate.

KATE.—(Laughing.)—Oh! such a man! Such a man!

FANNIE.—Our cousin?

KATE.—Yes, he has come! Stiff as a ramrod. Bowed as if he had no joint in the back of his neck. (Bowing stiffly.) Good day, uncle Marston. Hark! he's coming.

Enter Mr. Marston and Malcolm. The latter wears a traveling-dress, shabby, an old hat, has his hair in disorder, and carries a huge volume under his arm.

MR. MARSTON.—These are my girls, Malcolm! Fannie, Kate, your cousin Malcolm.

MALCOLM.—(Bowing stiffly.)—Your servant, ladies.

KATE.—(Courting very deeply.)—Good cousin, yours.

FANNIE.—(Coldly.)—Cousin Malcolm, we are happy to welcome you to Flowerdale.

MALCOLM.—(Sitting down and opening his book.)—I was reading, as I came here, a treatise on the culture of black-eyed beans, which is very curious. (Reads.)

MR. MARSTON.—(Aside.)—Bless my heart! this is a pretty beginning.

FANNIE.—(To Kate.)—You will have your hands full to civilize him.

KATE.—(To Fannie.)—I'll do it, though, never fear.

MR. MARSTON.—Well, girls, I'll leave Malcolm with you

for a short time. I wish to speak to my gardener about the magnolia tree.

Exit Mr. Marston.

FANNIE.—(Aside to Kate.)—I'll leave you. He seems absorbed in his book.

Exit Fannie.

KATE.—(Aside.)—This beauteous student is very handsome. How can I open the campaign? First, I'll make him look up. (Aloud.) Ahem! (Aside.) He does not hear. (Aloud.) Ahem!

MALCOLM.—(Reading without looking up.)—As regards the structure of this stupendous monument of art, language is inadequate to depict its wondrous excellence. We may gaze, may pause before it daily, yet never—

KATE.—(Loudly.)—Mr. Malcolm Hoyle.

MALCOLM.—(Looking up with an absent air.)—I beg pardon, did you speak?

KATE.—Are you aware, sir, that you and I are left to entertain each other?

MALCOLM.—(Looking round the room.)—Ah! indeed! So we are. (Bends over his book again.)

KATE.—(Aside.)—Provoking fellow! (Aloud.) Well, sir, it is usually the gentleman's part to speak first. (After a moment's silence.) I say, sir, it is usually the gentleman's part to entertain the lady.

MALCOLM.—(Pettishly.)—What a noise! Really, if this is the country quiet my uncle promised me, I shall again retire to the city. (Reads again.)

KATE.—(Aside.)—An iceberg is quite a genial companion compared with this man. (Aloud.) Cousin!

MALCOLM.—(Reading without looking up.)

“What cracker is this same that deals my ears
With this abundance of superfluous breath.”

KATE.—(Indignantly.)—Sir?

MALCOLM.—(Quietly.)—Shakspeare, cousin. (Reads.)

KATE.—You are insulting, sir. (Aside.) He does not seem to hear, much less to heed. (Aloud.) If, sir, you wish to be impertinent—(louder)—I say, sir, if you wish to be impertinent—

MALCOLM.—(Reading, not looking up.)

“Think you a little din can daunt mine ears?
Have I not, in my time, heard lions roar?
Have I not heard great ordnance in the field,
And Heaven's artillery thunder in the skies?
And shall you fright me with a woman's tongue—”

KATE.—This is too much. (In a loud, indignant tone.)

Mr. Hoyle!

MALCOLM.—(Calmly looking up.)—I beg pardon, did you speak? (Reads.)

KATE.—(Aside.)—One might as well scold a stone wall. I'll try coaxing. (Aloud, tenderly, laying her hand on Malcolm's arm.) My dear cousin!

MALCOLM.—(Rising and removing her hand.)—Young woman, you annoy me!

Exit Malcolm.

KATE.—(Looking after him.)—Oh! such a man! Man? He's a bear!

Curtain falls.

SCENE II.—AGE.

Scene—Same as scene I. *Enter Fannie.*

FANNIE.—To-day it must come! I must tell my father of my marriage, and, as I am of age, assert my independence. Yet, if he would but love my husband, how happy it would make me! I fear there is no hope of it. Kate's suit does not seem to prosper, spite of the spirit with which she pursues her point. There are times when, I fancy, Malcolm's eyes follow her with a look of fondness, yet they so soon fall again upon the book, that it is impossible for me to be certain. Oh! if he would only propose to her, I might, in the first pleasure my father would feel, gain a lenient judgment for my rebellion.

Enter Leonard.

LEONARD.—I am punctual, dear Fannie. This is the hour you appointed for me to claim my bride.

FANNIE.—Oh! Leonard, I so dread my father's anger.

LEONARD.—It seems rather hard that an old quarrel between your father and mine should separate us.

FANNIE.—True! Well, come, we will have it over.

LEONARD.—How you tremble! Never fear, darling. If your father is harsh, trust your husband to be all love, and make your future so bright that you will forget past unkindness.

FANNIE.—Dear Leonard.

Exeunt.

Enter Malcolm.

MALCOLM.—A pretty fellow I am, to be sure. I came here resolved to force my cousins to reject me, and leave me to my beloved books, and now I would give the whole library to win Kate for my wife. My bonny Kate!

Enter Mr. Marston.

MR. MARSTON.—Ah! Malcolm, my boy, you are here! Without a book! why what will happen next?

MALCOLM.—I was about to seek you, uncle, to ask your consent to my paying my addresses to my cousin—

MR. MARSTON.—You have them, my boy, of course! I thought that was understood. I told you, the day you arrived, that Fannie—

MALCOLM.—But, sir, it is not Fannie. I admit she is charming; but I love Kate.

Enter Kate. She stands back, not perceived by the others.

MR. MARSTON.—You! You in love with my daughter Kate!

KATE.—(Aside.)—Seems to me that conversation is an interesting one.

MALCOLM.—It is true, sir. I have tried in vain to conquer the feeling. I do, indeed, love her.

MR. MARSTON.—Tut! tut! A mere child. Now Fannie—

MALCOLM.—Is lovely, I grant; but Kate, and Kate only, is mistress of my heart. Such vivacity, such wit, beauty, intelligence! Oh! uncle, let me woo Kate!

KATE.—(Aside.)—Oh! that is delicious.

MR. MARSTON.—But her age—

MALCOLM.—Eighteen! the most charming age in the world.

MR. MARSTON.—But if I consent, have you spoken to her?

MALCOLM.—Not yet. But I will win her, never fear.

KATE.—(Aside.)—Will you?

MR. MARSTON.—Well, well, if she is willing I suppose I must not be too cruel.

MALCOLM.—Thank you, dearest, best of uncles. *Exit.*

Enter Fannie and Leonard.

Kate comes forward with them, as if just entering.

MR. MARSTON.—My dear follow, I—(seeing Leonard.) Hey-day, what is this? What are you doing, sir, in my house?

FANNIE.—Hush! Leonard, let me speak. Father, I will explain—

MR. MARSTON.—Explain! I will hear nothing while that man stands beneath my roof. Leave my house, sir, instantly!

LEONARD.—If, sir, you will allow me to speak—

MR. MARSTON.—Not a word! Have I arrived at my age to be bearded by a boy?

FANNIE.—Father, for pity's sake let me speak! I have done wrong, perhaps; yet (looking at Leonard) my love—

MR. MARSTON.—What! your love? Have you dared, Leonard, to make love to my child?

LEONARD.—Mr. Marston, I am proud to call your daughter my wife!

MR. MARSTON.—Your wife! It is time this was put to a stop. (To Fannie.) Go to your room, Miss.

FANNIE.—I must, for the first time, father, refuse to obey you. Leonard is my husband, and, as to-day I am of age—

MR. MARSTON.—(Sadly.)—So my child's first act of freedom is to marry her father's enemy.

LEONARD.—Not so. Do but smile upon our union, and no father ever had a more devoted son than I will be to you.

FANNIE.—Dear father, listen to him for my sake.

KATE.—And mine.

MR. MARSTON.—You, too. Well, as you are of age, and I cannot help myself, I suppose I must forgive you this time.

FANNIE.—(Joyfully.)—And we promise never to do so again.

MR. MARSTON.—(To **Kate**.)—But do not imagine, if you follow their example, that I will be so lenient a second time.

KATE.—Never fear. I promise not to elope till I am of age.

Curtain falls.

SCENE III.—MANAGE.

Scene—Same as scenes I and II.

Enter Kate and Fannie.

KATE.—This is enchanting! My most studious and un-gallant cousin a suitor for my hand, and so curtain, too, of success. Really his lordship seems to consider that he is conferring a personal favor.

FANNIE.—Have you seen him this morning?

KATE.—Not since Leonard left us to prepare the house for you.

FANNIE.—Imagine him, then, in a suit of fine broadcloth, clean linen, glossy hair, patent leather boots—

KATE.—Stop! stop! My fancy is not sufficiently vivid to paint such a picture. Malcolm well dressed! Oh! Cupid! Cupid! What a potent warrior you are!

FANNIE.—But, Kate, I pity you.

KATE.—You need not, for, tell it not, Fannie, your madcap sister has fairly lost her heart to that modern Timon.

FANNIE.—That is why I pity you. Malcolm, who imagined, from your wayward freaks for the last week, that you are quite his slave, will rule "*en grand Seigneur!*"

KATE.—Will he? What will you say if he hands me my pocket-handkerchief upon his bended knee.

FANNIE.—Impossible! Fortunes could not force him to the position.

KATE.—But I will. Leave me to manage him.

FANNIE.—Well, success attend you. *Exit Fannie.*

KATE.—(Sitting down at a table.)—Now to pay my lover for a week's indifference! (Takes a book and opens it.) Hark! he is coming! (Begins to read.)

Enter Malcolm, well dressed.

MALCOLM.—(Aside.)—She is here. Reading, too. What a white hand supports her head. (Aloud.) Kate! (Silence for a moment.)

MALCOLM.—(Louder.)—Kate!

KATE.—(Looking up absently.)—I beg pardon, did you speak? (Reads again.)

MALCOLM.—(Surprised.)—Why, cousin, I never saw you so studious before. I wish to speak to you. We are alone. (Aside.) She does not hear a word. I say, (louder,) cousin, we are alone!

KATE.—(Looking round.)—Ah! so we are. (Reads again.)

MALCOLM.—Usually 's such cases conversation takes the place of study.

KATE.—(Reading without looking up.)—

“Give me

Leave to enjoy myself. The place that does
Contain my books, the best companions, is
To me a glorious court.”

MALCOLM.—Cousin Kate! Kate! I say.

KATE.—(Petulantly.)—Fie! what a noise! One never knows an hour's peace, with a man in the house. I must retire to the city for a little quiet! (Reads again.)

MALCOLM.—(Aside.)—

“What change comes o'er the spirit of her dream?” My madcap cousin a student! Is it love prompts her?

KATE.—(Aside.)—I'll cure him of that impression speedily.

MALCOLM.—Fair cousin, may I speak a word with you?

KATE.—(Reading without looking up.)—I wonder you will still be talking, Signor Benedict; nobody marks you!

MALCOLM.—(Indignantly.)—Do you mean to be personal?

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KATE.—(Quietly looking up.)—Shakspeare, cousin!

MALCOLM.—The quotation was quite too pointed to be unintentional. (Aside.) She does not listen. (In a loud, decided tone.) Miss Kate Marston!

KATE.—(Looking up.)—I beg pardon, did you speak? (Reads again.)

MALCOLM.—I did speak. I wish to inquire why you insult me—after—(aside.) Is she deaf? She does not seem to hear. Ah! I see! She is feigning indifference to hide emotion. Dear girl, I will relieve her mind. (Aloud, tenderly, leaning over **Kate's** chair, and taking her hand.) Dearest, best cousin Kate!

KATE.—(Withdrawing her hand.)—Young man, you annoy me!

MALCOLM.—(Angrily.)—What does all this mean?

KATE.—(Rising.)—This constant talking really jars upon my nerves. I will retire to my own room to meditate and study. (Going.)

MALCOLM.—Cousin Kate, stay one minute.

KATE.—(Returning slowly.)—Certainly, five if you like. (Looks at her watch.)

MALCOLM.—Are you so pressed for time?

KATE.—Well, sir, you have called me back. (Drops her handkerchief.) Dear me, my handkerchief!

MALCOLM.—I wished to say to you—

KATE.—I have dropped my handkerchief.

MALCOLM.—(Carelessly.)—So I perceive.

KATE.—Well, sir, it is customary for a gentleman to hand a lady what she drops.

MALCOLM.—Is it?

KATE.—Certainly. Since you will not restore that one, I must go to my room for another. (Going.)

MALCOLM.—Stay! stay! Here it is! (Picks it up, and offers it carelessly.)

KATE.—Is that the position to assume when you offer anything to a lady? Kneel, sir!

MALCOLM.—If I kneel to a woman, never!

KATE.—We waste time! I must go to my room to study.

MALCOLM.—No! no! (Kneels.) See, I comply.

Enter Fannie, unseen by Malcolm; Kate motions her to be silent.

KATE.—Now that you are in a proper position, speak! I listen!

MALCOLM.—(Rising.)—Cousin—

KATE.—Do not rise!

MALCOLM.—But Kate—

KATE.—(Going.)—I go then.

MALCOLM.—(Retaining his position.)—Be it as you will. See, I kneel to tell you I love you. Will you return my love?

Enter Mr. Marston and Leonard.

FANNIE.—Marvelous!

MR. MARSTON.—What do I see?

LEONARD.—Malcolm Hoyle on his knees to a woman.

MALCOLM.—(Rising.)—I wait my answer, cousin. Do not mind these intruders.

FANNIE.—(To **Kate**.)—How did you manage it?

KATE.—(To **Fannie**.)—That's my secret. (To **Malcolm**.) Cousin Malcolm!

MALCOLM.—(Coming to her side.) I am all impatience for your answer, Kate.

KATE.—And it shall be a quotation from your favorite, Shakspeare:

“To you I give myself, for I am yours.”

MR. MARSTON.—So! so! You did manage to win my girl's heart, Malcolm!

MALCOLM.—(Taking **Kate's** hand, and speaking to audience.)—If we can manage, also, to win the favor of our friends here, our efforts will not have been made in vain.

Curtain falls.

Position of characters at fall of curtain.

FANNIE. LEONARD. **KATE.** **MALCOLM.** **MR. MARSTON.**

“OUT OF THE SHADOW.”

BY MRS. N. M. M'CONAUGHEY.

CHEERLESS was the attic which little Alice entered one dreary December day, after a long walk in the icy streets. There was no fire whatever in the broken grate, and the keen air whistled through the half covered roof, sifting down the fine snow on the bare floor. But though the place was so utterly cheerless, there was a smile as well as a tear in her brown eyes as she entered. In that low room was the only heart on earth that cared for her. A loving sister watched for her return, and had ever a gentle word and kiss for the little one she had received from a dying mother's arms, and over whom she had watched with maternal tenderness.

Day by day she had toiled for her support, unheeding the cruel exactions and often harsh words of her steel-hearted employer. Not unfrequently was she kept busy until far into the night, working costly fabrics into cloaks and mantillas to glitter in the fashionable promenade; thinking sometimes, poor girl, how a single yard of that costly trimming would bring plenty to her destitute home. Still, she was usually content with her frugal fare, for the white wings of purity and peace were folded in her bosom, and she blest God that actual want had never stared them in the face.

But, at length, a dark day came. The racking cough which had so long distressed her, became deeper seated, and she could no longer rise from her bed. After the scanty earnings were exhausted, the few articles of furniture were parted with, one by one, to obtain the daily loaf of bread; but in a little time this resource failed, and ghastly famine glared upon them.

To-day, little Alice had wandered out, hoping to find a few sticks with which to make a little blaze, and, on her return, she found her sister much weaker.

“Dear Jenny,” said the child, “I could find nothing to eat but these turnips and potato parings, which I picked up in a rubbish box on the side-walk. I have washed them quite clean at the pump, and they will be better than nothing. I eat some of the turnip chips raw, I was so hungry. I got these few sticks and cinders, too, from an ash-tub, though an old woman, with a bag on her back, beat me with her iron

hook because I took them. A policeman saw her, and said, ‘Let the child alone,’ or she might have hurt me worse, she was so angry. But, poor sister, you are almost starved to death, I will cook these things as soon as I can make the fire go. There are six matches left in the box; I have a lot of paper I found in the street just after they had swept a store.” The child set herself busily to work, and soon a little glow was kindled, and the only saucepan set over it with a little water, and the uninviting repast was prepared.

“You cannot eat it, Jenny,” said the child, with tears in her eyes, as her sister put aside the dish, after a slight effort to eat.

“You have done very nicely, little sister,” she said; “but I do not feel much hunger now. I think I am past that. So take the rest yourself, darling. I never expected to see you reduced to this; but it is all right, no doubt. And always remember, Allie, that any amount of suffering is better than the least degree of sinning. Although all seems so dark now, I feel strangely hopeful for you. I shall soon be safe in the arms of Jesus, and oh! how I wish I might take you with me, if it were God's will; but I know He will take care of you. I prayed to him nearly all day for you, Allie; trust in him and he will surely raise you up a friend. I cannot talk much with you, now; but another time I will tell you what I wish you to do when I am gone. Come and lie down with me, precious, darling little sister, and don't sob so wildly, dear one. There, go to sleep, love,” and she gathered the sobbing child to her bosom, and soothed her as a mother would her frightened, suffering babe.

It was broad daylight when Alice awoke. She was very stiff and cold and looked about for Jenny. She seemed to be kneeling by the bedside, but when Alice spoke, there was no answer. The face was colorless as marble, and a sweet smile wreathed the thin white lips. She seemed to have risen at night for the little cup of water, and to have died as she knelt to breathe a prayer to the kind Father, who in love gathered her into his glorious fold, where cold and hunger and pain and sorrow are forever strangers.

A pine coffin and a quick rattling of the cart

over the stones to the paupers' burial place. No one heeded it, except one breaking heart which flung itself upon the rough box, and shrieked as they tore her from it.

It was all over, and little Alice found herself homeless and friendless in the great bustling city. She was almost stupefied by grief, and almost unconsciously she wandered to the market near the river, and stopped to warm her fingers at a little charcoal furnace. A stout Jersey farmer was standing near, dressed in a shaggy "great coat," with a woolen comforter about his neck. He made room for her beside the fire, and looked compassionately on her thin, old dress and shivering frame. His big, brown hand brought out a rosy-cheeked apple from his over-coat pocket, which he gave to Alice. The tears came into the eyes of the poor, famished child, as she eagerly took it, exclaiming, "Oh, thank you, thank you, sir."

It was eaten quickly, and the farmer who had watched the process, said,

"I wish I had another for you, little girl, you seem to like apples so well. Your folks should not let you come out such a cold day with them thin clothes on, and no shawl neither."

Just then a coarse market-woman, evidently in a bad humor, came along, and giving Alice a rude push, bade her "be off with her rags, and not take up the room of her betters. Watching a chance to steal something from the stands, I don't doubt?" she added.

The child moved slowly and tearfully away, for the kind word and act of the moment before, had drawn her whole heart toward the farmer. Poor little one! with her loving heart torn loose from every earthly stay, how eagerly it caught at every straw for support!

But the big, rough hand was stretched out to prevent her going, and the man drew her to his side, saying,

"Stay here, little girl, the old woman shall not hurt you. She is only a bit fretty this morning, and means well enough. There, Marry, are two customers for you, be quick, or you'll lose them;" and the woman stepped briskly to her place.

The farmer looked at the child intently, and by his kind words and seeming interest, soon drew from her the simple history of her sorrows; related with all a child's frankness. The shaggy sleeve was drawn across his eyes more than once as he listened, and he had too honest a heart to be ashamed of it.

When she had finished, he said, "Then you have not any relations in the city, Alice? Nobody to look for you home to-night?"

"Oh, sir," she answered, "I have no home now. None but the station-house," and she shuddered at the thought of sleeping there; associated as it is in the mind of every poor child in the city, with the idea of drunken brawls, theft, and every crime.

"Will you go home with me, Alice? My Hannah will be a mother to you, and you shall not want for anything. It would seem most like having our little dead Emily back again," he said, half to himself. "She had great brown eyes just like yours. You make me think of her every minute;" and a big tear was brushed aside. "She has laid in her grave three months come Sunday, and the baby, our little Benny, has forgotten all about her as was so fond of him. He would leave his mother's arms any time to go to her. Will you go home with me, Alice, and be a sister to little Benny?"

"Oh, sir, will you take me?" said the child, her face glowing with eager hope, while her frame trembled with the intense excitement.

"Be sure I will—and now we had better jog on, so as to be home in time for supper. I have sold out all my Christmas turkeys, and the big wagon is just round the corner. But you can't ride in the cold with them clothes on," he continued, looking at her thin garments. Taking her by the hand, he sought a store, near by, where he bought a warm woolen shawl, a knitted hood, and fleecy lined gloves, which he bade her put on. "There, those will stand you till we get home, and then the mother will rig you out more comfortable." The child's eyes danced with pleasure as she viewed the treasures; but she could only say, with glad tears, "Oh, sir, you are too good."

"Not a bit," laughed the good-natured farmer. "You are my little girl now, and I must provide for you."

They soon reached the covered Jersey wagon, and lifting the little girl in, he seated himself beside her, drawing the buffalo robe well around her feet. And so they rode on; farmer Betts chatting all the time with his happy little companion, who could hardly realize her identity.

"Then, you like apples, Alice, do you? You shall have bushels of them this winter if you want. Do you like to feed chickens and turkeys?"

"I think I should, dearly; but I never saw any live ones except those in the market."

"Well, I never! I guess you don't eat them very often either, do you now?"

"We have had no meat of any kind for a long time."

"No meat? Why, what did you have for breakfast?"

"Only the apple you gave me, sir."

"Why, Alice, I never heard the like. What did you have yesterday?"

"Only some potato and turnip parings I found in the street," said the child, modestly.

The astonished farmer gazed at her for the first time doubtfully; but there was no untruthfulness in those full, candid eyes.

"Is it possible there are any people so poor? I never'll waste a piece of bread again, if that's so. I am sorry I did not know you were so hungry when we were in the market; but here is a piece of bread and butter and cold meat I had left from my dinner."

The child's hunger was keen, and the present relief of mind made the want doubly felt. She devoted it hastily, despite her effort to control herself, for "hunger knows no law."

"Hannah will have us a good warm supper when we get home, all ready, I know. She never fails of that when I go down to York. I guess Davy can jog on a little faster, such good roads," and he gave the lines a shake, which Davy seemed to understand as an intimation that he might hurry on to his warm stable rather faster. An hour more and they reached the pleasant farm-house. The good wife, Hannah, came out to meet her husband, and inquired, with some surprise,

"Why, who has thee here, William?" For being a Quaker born, she occasionally used their forms of address. Alice shrank back, a little fearful that there would be no welcome for her hero:

A few words told the simple story, as he lifted the child from the wagon and placed her inside the gate. It was enough, and the good mother's arms and heart opened wide to receive her.

"Thee is welcome, little one. Thee shall never want for a home again," and she brought her into the cheerful "family room," and placed Emily's low rocking-chair beside the bright fire for her. With gentle hands she removed her shawl and hood, and, when she had grown warm and comfortable, it took but a minute to exchange her thin, but neat, old garments for a warm, dark worsted suit which had belonged to the loved and lost one.

"Just about her size," said the good woman, thoughtfully, "only thinner. She would rather thee had them than that they should lie idle. She would give away all she possessed to make any one else happier—Emily would."

The transformed child looked really beautiful after having carefully brushed her soft brown hair, and confined it with a long circular comb.

"I shouldn't know her, wife," said Mr. Betts,

as she took her seat at the table. What a princely feast that seemed to Alice, who had never beheld such bounties before! What a luxury to her, seemed even a slice of that good home-made bread and butter, or one of those delicious, steaming "buckwheats!" And yet, the ruddy boiled ham, cut in such generous slices, the pellucid honey fairly overflowing its waxy cells, the light golden cup-cake, and deep glass of spiced apples, formed only an ordinary repast in the house of the prosperous farmer.

When supper was over, little Benny thought it time to wake up, and sat on his mother's lap while Ann cleared away the table. The baby soon made friends with Alice, after the first shyness and curiosity about the stranger had worn off, and even suffered her to rock him a little while in the low rocking-chair.

The mother knew that Alice was weary, and showed her early to a snug little room adjoining her own, where, after nicely tucking in the warm covers all about her, with a good night kiss, she left her to her own thoughts. And, oh! what a confusion of memories rushed upon her mind! But first, and above all others, was the pale face of that dear, dear sister, and she wept as if her heart would break at the thought of never, never seeing her again. But soon the mood grew calmer, and then she longed to have her sister know what kind friends God had raised up for her, and with the half-formed prayer that some kind watcher-angel would whisper all her happiness into her sister's ear, she fell asleep. In dreams, she saw again the bare, cold attic room, with its broken window and cheerless grate; again the rough box was brought in to bear away the gentle form she loved so tenderly, and again she lived over the same wild, heart-breaking agony of grief. But an angel form entered the narrow door-way, and a face radiant with immortal youth and vigor smiled upon her. She felt again the soft caresses of her loving sister, and grew calm and peaceful resting on her breast.

She awoke late, but with a light heart. How beautiful seemed the sunshine struggling through the pretty window-shade! She had never seen such sunlight before. What a beautiful red and white bed-cover was spread over her! She traced the quaint pattern out with her eye in childish wonder and admiration. What a collection of treasures was spread out on the little table across the room, a tiny work-box, a china vase, a doll and doll's bureau, with many glittering toys which she had never seen before, except in shop windows! Was this really to be her home, and this her own little room, where

she could look at, and really handle all those beautiful things, every day if she liked? A gentle footstep and a softly opened door brought a glad answer.

"Has thee slept well, Alice? I will help thee dress now if thee likes to rise," and a gentle, loving kiss was pressed upon her cheek.

Breakfast was over, but a nice dish of hot cream toast and leg of broiled chicken awaited her in the corner; and Benny sat on the floor at her feet, laughing and playing with black Bruno's shaggy ears, while he occasionally glanced with his merry eye at the new found friend of the night before.

And this was but the dawning of many bright

mornings. Alice was adopted in heart as well as in name, and soon grew to be the light of that cheerful dwelling. Her mind and heart both expanded with hot-house rapidity in the genial atmosphere of love and physical comfort, and when, a few years later, the gentle hand which led and cared for her so kindly grew a little tremulous, it was "daughter Alice" who placed the easy-chair in the cheeriest corner and took upon her young shoulders all the care of the household. Never did the farmer regret his deed of love to the homeless orphan, but ever regarded it as one of God's richest blessings to him and his. Truly "he who soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

P E R F E C T L Y H E A R T L E S S .

BY MARY E. CLARKE.

"PRETTY? yes, rather pretty, but perfectly heartless!" said Mrs. Holmes to Dr. Stanley, with whom she was conversing, at a large, brilliant party.

"Heartless! with that sensitive mouth, and those eyes, so deep and full of expression," said the gentleman, musingly.

"I don't admire her style of beauty at all. She looks like a wax doll, and her heartlessness is proverbial. Since her uncle left her so wealthy she has had lovers by the score, and flirts with every one. Why, look at her now!"

Dr. Stanley's eyes followed the direction in which the lady waved her fan, and rested on the central figure of a group round the piano. It was a lady, young and fair, with a tall, exceedingly graceful figure, pure Greek features, and large blue eyes. Her hair was short, but the soft, full curls made a lovely frame for the fair face. Her dress was of dark lace; and twisted amongst the golden curls were deep crimson flounces, with dark green leaves; and on the snowy throat and arms glittered blood-red rubies. She was conversing gayly with a knot of gentlemen, and Dr. Stanley sauntered over to the group.

"Miss Marston," said one gentleman, "what has become of Harold Graham?"

The tiny hands swept over the ivory keys of the grand piano, in the measure of a brilliant waltz, and another of the group, supposing Miss Marston did not hear the question, said,

"Pawned his dress coat, I guess, and can't appear."

"He was wretchedly poor," said a third.

"Perhaps he has committed suicide; it is three weeks since he disappeared," said another.

"Oh! I hope not!" said Miss Marston; "we want his tenor for our next musical soiree. It would be too provoking for him to commit suicide."

"Mrs. Holmes was right," thought the doctor, "she is perfectly heartless. Poor Harold!"

He turned from the piano, but stopped as a full, rich voice broke out into song. Miss Marston was singing "Schubert's Last Greeting," and into the mournful words she poured such wailing energy, and deep pathos, that group

after group, in the large rooms, ceased their gay converse to listen to the music.

"Can she sing so without heart or feeling?" muttered the doctor, again drawing nearer the piano.

"Eva," said a young lady, as the last notes of the song died away, "Eva, play a polka, won't you?"

A contemptuous smile quivered, for a moment, on Eva Marston's lip; then, nodding good naturedly, she dashed off into a lively polka, which soon melted the group round the piano into merry dancers; and Dr. Stanley went with the rest.

The next morning Miss Marston sat in her own room, writing a letter. Peep over her shoulder at one sentence,

"All hollow, all heartless, Miriam? You blame me for flirting; you are not here to see how they follow me merely for my money; not one true heart amongst them all. There was one, Harold."

A knock at the door interrupted her.

"Come in!" and a woman entered, with a large basket of washing.

"Good morning," said Eva, pleasantly. "How is Terence this morning?"

"Oh! Miss, it's beautiful he is the day. Sure, marm, I'm sorry ye've had to wait so long for the wash."

"Never mind that. How could you wash with the poor little fellow so sick?"

"Sure, Miss, it's many a one expects their clothes, sick or well; and isn't Jerry sitting up the day playing with the toys ye sint him, and Pat, that I kept home from school, a-minding him?"

"How many pieces, Mary?" said Eva, taking out her purse.

"Oh! Miss, you don't owe Mary a cent. There's the dother ye left the money to pay, and the wood ye sint, and the praties and milk, and the money ye gave me last week; sure, Miss, it's in your debt I am for washing the rest of your life."

"What I gave Terence has nothing to do with my washing bill," said Eva, rapidly counting the pieces. "There," and she took the pieces from her purse, "that is eighty."

"Miss Eva," said Mary, and then stopped.

“Well, Mary?”

“Sure, Miss, you do so much good with your money, I’m ashamed to tell you——”

“Tell me what?”

“Well, Miss, it’s about the young man that’s rented my room. Ye mind where the widder died last fall. He come a week back, Miss, and he never come down stairs for three days back, so this morning I wint up, and he’s sick with a fever, out of his head entirely, Miss. If yus would come now.”

“Wait, Mary, I’ll go with you.”

“He’s dreadful poor, I guess, Miss; for it’s starving little furniture; nothing but a bed and a table and chair, and no thrunk at all, at all, but a bit of a carpet-bag.”

Throwing off her rich silk wrapper, Eva put on a dark gray dress and cloak, and added a close silk bonnet with a thick veil.

“Come, Mary!” and the two left the house, together.

In a low, close room, on a pallet-bed, lay Mary Gennis’ boarder. The face, against the coarse ticking pillow, was such as one fancies for that of his favorite poet. The hair was dark, waving over a broad white forehead, and the deep set eyes were hazel, large and full; and the features delicate. Usually the face was pale, but now it was crimson with fever. The eyes, too, fierce and wild. But even, with all this, that face was beautiful with an almost unearthly beauty. Into that poor, low room, Eva, with her sombre dress and radiant beauty, came like a pitying angel. She gave one glance at the invalid’s face, and then crossed the room to his side.

“Eva!” said the sick man, “Eva!”

“He knows me,” she murmured, drawing back. But the young man moaned her name again, and then broke forth in wild, delirious ravings.

“Mary,” said Eva, “send Patrick to me. I will find pencil and paper.”

Mary left the room, and Eva turned to the table to find paper and pencil. She wrote two hasty **notes**. One was to her housekeeper for pillows and sheets. The other was to Dr. Stanley, who did not guess the friend who sent him so much practice among poor patients, and saw that the young physician was well paid.

Having dispatched Patrick with the notes, Eva tried to make the desolate room more home-like. Lifting from the table a waistcoat, something dropped from the pocket to the floor. She picked it up. It was a small miniature case, open; and painted on the ivory was Eva Marston’s face.

A smile, gentle and pitying, came on her lip.

“He *did* love me then! Really love me, and would not seek me with the herd of fortune-hunters who follow me, and that is the reason I have missed him for so long.”

“Arrah, Miss, here’s the doctor!”

“Stop him, Mary, I will go in here. Remember, Mary, you don’t know my name!” and Eva went into another little room, vacant and adjoining that of the invalid’s. The door stood ajar, and Dr. Stanley’s first exclamation reached her.

“Harold! have I found you at last, and in such a place?”

Eva’s eyes ranged over the capabilities of the room in which she stood, and she nodded, saying, “It will do! larger and better than the other, but a poor place at best.”

The next day, when Dr. Stanley called to see his patient, Mary, with a pardonable pride, ushered him into the room that had been vacant before. A soft carpet was on the floor, and a small fire in the grate, the latter screened from the bed by a neat shade. Soft muslin curtains, snowy white, draped the window. The bed could scarcely be recognized, with its pure white pillows, counterpane, and sheets. A little table stood beside the bed, with the medicines the doctor had ordered, and an exquisite goblet of cooling drink.

“The lady ye mind I told you of, that sint ye to Terry,” said Mary. “We fixed the room yesterday, and my good man and I moved him in to-day, so she’ll find him here when she comes. It’s asleep he’s been for better’n three hours, sir.”

Two hours later Harold was still asleep, but then he opened his eyes. The cold, cheerless room was changed, as if by enchantment, and, (Harold thought he was dreaming,) an angel face bent over him, with pitying eyes, and a smile tender as a mother’s over her child.

“Eva!” he whispered, “oh! that I could die in such a dream. Never awake to the bitter, hopeless love. Let me die now!”

Was it a dream, that sweet low voice answering him?

“Harold, you will not die, you will live, live for me! Your genius shall be recognized, your pictures sought. No more struggling for life, but only for fame.” And the tears fell as she spoke.

Dr. Stanley, standing in the doorway, recognized the ball-room belle, and the object of his friend’s long-silent, hopeless love.

Softly he glided down the stairs, for he knew

that a better medicine than he could prescribe
was within the patient's grasp.

And the world said,

"Just think of Eva Marston, rich and such a
belle, marrying Harold Graham, the artist, poor
as a church mouse."

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"PLOTTING AND PLANNING": CHAPTER I.

BY MARY W. JANVRIN.

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"PLOTTING AND PLANNING."

BY MARY W. JANVRIN.

CHAPTER I.

"THERE, there, mother Elsie, just look at these two precious documents, and see what a set of young scapegraces we've got on our hands to attend to! This comes of having a good disposition, and promising to play guardian to all my old friends' orphans. Faith, there'll be war in the camp, sure enough, now! What with wild Madge, her pranks and her mischief, and young Master Richard and his college chums—and the two children hating each other so—we shall have a time of it! Pity that we set our hearts on this match so, Elsie; we might have known how young folks are—if they got wind of it, they'd go heart and hand against it—for Madge is shy as a hawk, and Richard's got all the blood of the Hardings in him. But do read the letters, mother!" and uncle Ben Hobart settled back in his arm-chair with a genuine expression of distress on his round, genial face.

Mrs. Hobart, or "Mother Elsie," as uncle Ben persisted in styling his better half, smoothed down the folds of her black silk apron, perched her spectacles anew on her nose; and, by dint of long application, unraveled the following epistles—the first written in a delicate, boarding-school hand, and the other in bold, dashing, almost unintelligible chirography, as if penned in great haste. Let us overlook the good lady's shoulder as she reads:

"DEAR GUARDIANS—As exhibition is a week from to-day, I thought I would write, stating that I shall be at home by sunset the next day. My dear friend, Amanda Peabody, is dying for me to pass a month with her; but as you write me that Dick Harding is coming home, I have taken the liberty to invite Amanda to accompany me—for I can't endure the idea of playing the agreeable to 'Sir Richard,' whom, you know, I always hated from childhood, and Amanda will take him off my hands. I suppose his lordship has changed much since I saw him—but no doubt for the worse. Of course he will bring home a wiser head than he carried to Harvard; yet that seems incredible, for there was always enough conceit in him for a score. Please, dear uncle Ben, I hope you won't tease me in the way you used to about 'marrying Dick some day';

for if you do, I shall go straight home with Amanda, and not come back to Ashland till his visit is over. I am willing to tolerate him, but I give you fair warning that I shall not bear him any love, and I don't care if he knows it in the beginning. Now don't scold me for this naughty, willful letter, for I love you all—uncle Ben, aunty, and old nurse Eaton—as much as ever—everybody but Dick—and, lest you scold me, I sign myself, Yours in a pet,

MADGE."

The other letter, which aunt Elsie now opened, was from Richard Harding, and ran thus:

"DEAR UNCLE BEN—Have been off into the country, rusticating, with my chum, since my graduation, which happened about three weeks ago. Was quite overwhelmed by the weight of my laurels. Couldn't think of going up to old Ashland staggering under 'em, so slipped off into parts unknown to recuperate. Feel somewhat recovered now; guess I'll slide down home. Shall bring my chum, Hal Winstead, with me, to pass a couple of weeks or so, in troutng, gunning, etc. Reckon on 'a good time generally.' Somebody told me—else I dreamed it—that it's about time for Madge Brandon to graduate. Hope she won't happen home till Hal and I get away again. Can't you pack her off somewhere on a visit, if it should happen so? for neither chum nor I want to do the agreeable to a bread and butter school girl. We don't fancy the girls—that is, Hal don't; and you know that Miss Madge and I always quarreled through our childhood, and I can't believe that 'years of discretion' have brought either of us more amiable dispositions. Jove! wasn't she a little vixen then!—how her black eyes used to flash fire! But I suppose I did use to tease her slightly, though—for I have a faint recollection of playing 'the torment,' as my part in the *role* daily enacted at Ashland; yet, having no desire to renew it, I hope Madge won't happen at home while Hal and I are with you. We only run down for a short time, then we're off for Europe. Kiss aunt Elsie for me, and tell her to make her best drop-cakes, and get out the 'pink china' for our benefit. In haste,

DICK."

"Well, now, here's a pretty to do!" sighed uncle Ben, as "Mother Elsie" took off her glasses and refolded the letters. "What's to be done? they'll quarrel all the time, as they used to! But I can't see how we're to prevent it, either—for, faith! I believe Madge's half right when she says the boy's got conceit enough for a score. We shall have to give up the match, mother; they're too headstrong to pull together!"

"There, now, Benjamin, don't make a baby of yourself!" said aunt Elsie. "Scar'd to death by a couple of children! Give it up, indeed? The children'll do well enough if you'll let 'em alone. I don't believe in plotting and planning—at least, so't folks can *see* what you're aiming at. They'll make their own match fast enough if they think nobody else is plannin' for 'em; but you jest keep hectorin' 'em, and see how you'll come out! Don't you know that it's the only sure way, to let young folks manage their own love affairs? What if they *do* spat and flout?—they're only little love quarrels, and they like each other all the better for it afterward. And now, Benjamin, I hope you won't appear to notice everything that happens; but jest let 'em have their own head, and everything will come out right in the end. But, I declare, if I'd a known company was comin' so soon, I'd a made the raspberry jam! I guess I'll see if Betty and I can't do it to-morrow; and then there's the jellies to see to—and the tea cake to set to rise, and the Washington pies to get up, and the blanc mange—Dick does like my 'goodies' so, as he calls 'em, dear boy! And Margaret, too!—the children are glad enough to be at home again, I'm a thinking! Richard 'goin' off to Europe' and foreign parts, indeed, when I'd been a thinkin'—" but ah, aunt Elsie, what visions were those that mixed in with your "hospitable thoughts intent?" Who was "plotting and planning" then?

CHAPTER II.

Two young men sat in the parlor of a village hotel. Alton was one of the prettiest and quietest country towns in Connecticut, romantically situated on the banks of a blue river. Wooded heights sloped down to the water's edge; a white church spire rose amid the trees; neat, white houses lined the principal street leading through the village; a large brick edifice stood on a pleasant eminence, and several boarding houses in close proximity proclaimed this structure the boast of the town, as it was the pride of the county—"Alton Seminary."

A little way up the street, the "Mansion

House" reared its somewhat imposing front; and in a parlor of this hotel, one pleasant summer evening, sat our two young men in conversation.

"Hal," said the taller of the two, tossing his cigar from the open window, and running his fingers through his brown curls, "we must be off to-morrow, and early, too! Let's take a stroll down to the river, and sly round to the seminary grounds and bring the girls out. What say you?"

"Agreed!" exclaimed his companion, starting up; but, as he lightly set his hat on his black locks, he turned a penetrating look on his friend. "Dick, where's all this to end? Jupiter! it makes a fellow feel small to steal a girl's heart under false colors, then sneak cowardly away. If you're half as dead in love with that little black-eyed Miss Greyson as I am with Amanda Peabody, you would not turn your face homeward till you'd laid your 'heart, hand, and fortune' at her feet. Fact is, I believe you're unimpressible—a *bona fide* flirt; but I'll not take another moonlight walk with my dulcinea without committing myself! Come along, Dick, I'm desperate! I shall own up all!"

"Oh! stop now! What's the use of getting nervous, Hal? Now it's all very fine to while away a month or so in one of your humdrum country towns, by a little flirtation with one of these pretty boarding-school girls; but the idea of anything serious, pshaw! This sprightly little Greyson is pretty and witching, I acknowledge; but the idea of asking her to marry me—it's absurd! Richard Harding carries his heart in a securer place than to have it made captive so easily. Madge Greyson is pretty, and rather winning, but too tame. Jove! give me a girl of spirit! I know—or did know—another Madge, uncle Ben's ward—she and I were brought up together; and, Hal, there's fire enough in her composition, you'd better believe, to keep you on the look-out for the term of a natural lifetime. We always quarreled 'like everything,' as children say, when we were children together; but, somehow, old uncle Ben got it into his head that we were to marry each other when we 'got growed,' *a la* Topsy, and that, of course, set us against each other. And so we quarreled up to the very day when I left Ashland for college—and, shortly after, Miss Madge was sent off to some boarding-school or other, I'm sure I never asked where—and now I suppose if we ever meet again we shall quarrel as of old, from sheer force of habit. Indeed, I don't know but I've begun it already—for she may be at Ashland now, for aught I know, and

in my last letter to uncle Ben I said I hoped Madge wouldn't be there to annoy us—you and I, Hal. But come, now for a parting walk, chum!"

"Dick, you'll marry this Madge Brandon some day, I prophesy!" said Harry Winstead, as they went out together.

"Nonsense!" laughed Dick. "I admire a woman of spirit, as I told you; but Madge is a perfect vixen, and I've no particular desire to 'tame a shrew,' or 'catch a Tartar!' I'd go down on my knees to demure little Madge Greyson rather. But come!"

CHAPTER III.

THE large boarding-house connected with Alton Seminary was very quiet. "At nine o'clock," so ran the seminary regulations, "the lights in each room shall be extinguished, and the young ladies shall retire;" but very certain it was, that, on the night in question, at many a window, partially concealed by blinds and curtains, sat groups of young girls conversing softly in the moonlight, or slyly slipping through the galleries and down the staircases, they glided into the outer air, where, joined by some favored cousin, (?) they walked under that same summer moonlight, quite oblivious to the fact that to-morrow's recitations might suffer, or that the annual "Exhibition" stared them in the face in a few forthcoming days.

Singular, but true—isn't it, reader mine?—that Cupid's arrows always find easier entrance to girlhood hearts, than Euclid's theorems to girlhood brains. Alas! for willful woman.

"Madge," said one of a twain of young girls, who stood outside a little rustic gate at the extremity of the boarding-house grounds, "Madge, I can't help thinking that we are doing wrong in coming out here to meet *them*. How do we know but they think us merely silly, romantic boarding-school girls, and are trifling with us? We are doing wrong, Madge. To be sure, I was very grateful when Mr. Emmons rescued me from the river that day of the pic-nic; they all agreed I should certainly have been drowned before aid could have come; and even Madame Dorner herself went down into the parlor with me when he called next day to inquire after my health, and complimented him a great deal on his bravery; but, for all that, Madge, I can't help thinking these secret meetings are not quite right. If Mr. Emmons, or his friend, feel that interest in us they profess, why don't they visit us on levee night? They never come then."

"But madame is so strict. Of course her Argus eyes would be upon them, and she'd put down her foot for the proprieties; and so they'd rather met us here. I'm sure I can't see anything wrong in it, Amanda."

"Well, I don't see as we are 'wrong' exactly," replied Amanda; "but we are foolish, certain. I shan't come here any more. Let's go in now."

"If you want to, child, certainly!" said Madge. "But I see how it is: you're afraid you'll fall in love with this Harry Emmons. He is handsome, but rather too quiet for my fancy. Now Ned Hilton, it's genuine fun to flirt with him; no danger of breaking his heart, or getting mine broken in return. Wasn't that a capital idea of my new *sobriquet*, 'Miss Greyson'? I'm very certain the gentleman can't leave Alton now, and boast of his 'flirtation with Madge Brandon.' By the way, I wonder if he knew Dick Harding, at Harvard? I'll ask him. Amanda, don't hurry so! Where are you going? not in the house, child? But, hush! they are coming! there, up the path from the river! Now, don't play Miss Prim, but laugh and chat a little; and if Mr. Emmons talks sentiment, why you just sentimentalize in return, only make sure to keep your own heart untouched. That's the way I do—ah! good evening, gentlemen. My friend here was just about running away. Will you not thank me for detaining her, Mr. Emmons?" rang out in Madge Brandon's silvery, mischievous tones."

And "Harry Emmons," alias Harry Winstead, drew a fair white hand within his arm, and asked, earnestly, as the two walked apart,

"Miss Peabody, why would you shun me?"

And coquettish little Madge Brandon turned saucily to the young gentleman who stood near, and said, demurely,

"And shall I run into the house and report myself to madame as delinquent; or will Mr. Hilton lend me an arm for a short walk until reason shall have again resumed her sway over yonder moonstruck couple?"

"With pleasure, Miss Greyson!" was the quick reply.

As they emerged into the bright moonlight, he scanned long and earnestly the arch, merry face, whose eyelids at length drooped under his gaze. But evidently the perusal of those features brought no solution to the expression of puzzled mystery that deepened on his own face.

"Where can I have seen her before?" he unconsciously muttered, as he withdrew his gaze.

"Did you speak, Mr. Hilton?" asked Madge, demurely lifting her eyes.

"It is a habit of soliloquizing that I have

foolishly fallen into, Miss Greyson," he replied, rallyingly, with a smile.

"I should venture to infer that said soliloquies are not of the Hamlet order," rejoined Madge, archly, "since his were on *grave* subjects, while yours seem to be on *living* ones, Mr. Hilton."

Her companion bit his lips, and remained silent.

That night, when the two girls sought their room, blushing little Amanda Peabody buried her face on Madge's shoulder, and said, softly, with tear-filled eyes,

"Oh! Madge, he loves me! He said so to-night, and his name *isn't* 'Emmons'; but there! I promised not to tell. You will know all by-and-by. It was a freak of his. He is coming to our house in a week or two, and I can only spend a few days with you at Ashland. Oh! Madge, if you knew how happy—only kiss me, Madge!"

Madge Brandon bent down and imprinted a warm kiss on the white forehead, on her shoulder, and whispered,

"Amanda, I am glad it is so!" then abruptly turned away. An hour after, while her companion slept the gentle sleep of youth and innocence, Madge sat at the window, with pale, thoughtful face, while a few tears trickled through her fingers.

"We have parted," she murmured. "He told me that he left Alton to-morrow; and not a word of regret, nor wish that we might meet again! And I had so ridiculed the name of love, that he thought me light and fickle, and his heart is untouched!"

Long did the girl sit in the white moonlight, till the holy hush of night brought her calmness.

CHAPTER IV.

"WHAT, uncle Ben! Madge Brandon expected home to-morrow? Well, now, of course I have due respect for the young lady, and, on any ordinary occasion, would be happy to be her most devoted cavalier; but, really, just now you must excuse me. Hal and I go troutting up Mossdale river to-morrow; think we shall camp out a night or two. Perhaps you will call me rather ungallant, uncle; but I fancy that Madge, remembering our old-time animosity, will be quite willing to dispense with my company. 'A class-mate coming to spend a short time with her,' did you say? Well, Hal, there'll be a lady for you; you have a *penchant* for boarding-school misses, I believe," and Dick threw a meaning look into his friend's face.

It was the morning of a sultry, "muggy" day in August, and the two young men stood on the piazza of Ashland Mansion, attired in loose linen blouses, straw hats, and their fishing-rods in their hands. Uncle Ben leaned against a pillar, wiping the beaded sweat from his forehead. It had cost him something of an effort to impart the news of Madge's expected advent, for the inevitable hostile meeting of his two wards troubled the good old gentleman exceedingly; but, the ice once broken, a look of relief overspread his genial face. "Hey! mother Elsie—hey! wife!" he exclaimed, rubbing his hands in infinite glee, as, after watching the two young men disappear down the cool, shady highway, he turned into the long kitchen, where the dame was busying herself with superintending old Mrs. Eaton's "goodies," and smoothing the icing on a loaf of cake for the oven. "I've got rid of those youngsters for a couple of days; told Dick Madge was coming home, and, if she happens along to-night, I want you to take her in hand, and charge her to keep her unruly tongue. Else she'll surely begin on Dick. Faith! she may consider herself lucky if ever she gets so good a husband as the boy'll make. There's the right stuff for a nobleman in him; and I've no doubt but we'll bring about the match yet, if you only give Madge her lesson."

"Deary me, Benjamin, why can't you stop worryin', and plottin', and plannin', and let the young folks alone? Let the children be, father, and don't provoke 'em! Madge's headstrong, but she's got a good, affectionate heart; and she can't help takin' to Richard, for the lad's handsome as a p'ter, and good as he's handsome. That's a proper youth Richard's brought home with him—young Harry Winstead. I hope they'll all enjoy themselves; for, Benjamin, you know Margaret is goin' to bring home 'Mandy Peabody, and, if they'd only all be pleasant and social like, how cheerful it'll seem! It does me good, father, to have young folks in the house. But, la! the oven'll get too hot, and scorch the cake!"

CHAPTER V.

At sunset, on the following day, the old-fashioned stage coach came down the long country road, and drew up at the gate of the Ashland Mansion. Uncle Ben went down the gravelled avenue as fast as his rotundity would allow, and fairly lifted Madge from the coach with a hearty hug and smack which rang loudly on the air; while pretty little Amanda Peabody was welcomed with a demonstration scarcely

less hearty. And aunt Elsie stood on the broad piazza in her best cap and kerchief; while old Mrs. Eaton and Betty, the maid of all work, were greatly rejoiced at the arrival. And a merry evening was it that followed, after the two new-comers were duly regaled with aunt Elsie's golden sponge-cake and delicious jellies; nor was it until a late hour, that the duetts sung by two clear, girlish voices ceased, and the tones of the piano died out from the old-fashioned parlor.

At twilight on the following day, uncle Ben went down the lane leading to the fields in the rear of the mansion, to meet the two young men returning from the fishing excursion. Richard Harding's brown curls, moistened by perspiration, hung in masses over his white forehead; his companion bore a fine string of trout upon his arm; both looked fatigued and exhausted.

"Well, boys, a pretty hard tramp you've had of it, I reckon! It don't pay, does it? But ah, yes! fine lot of trout, I see! Betty'll dish some of 'em up for supper. Let me believe you, my young friend!" and the old gentleman walked on hurriedly. "But oh! I forgot, Dick, the girls are here. Madge is grown a real beauty, roguish as ever, too, I'll wager—and her little friend has taken my old heart by storm. You youngsters had better fix up a little, for Madge has got to be a young lady now—eh, Richard!"

"Botheration!" was Richard Harding's rather unclassical exclamation at this piece of information, after imparting which uncle Ben had hurried away with the string of trout on his arm. "A pretty muss, Hal, for fellows coming home tired to death, expected to come down to tea 'fixed up' in stiff dickys and dress coats, and all to entertain a couple of bread and butter school girls. Jupiter! why, if they must needs come at all, couldn't they have kept away till to-morrow! I've half a good mind to go back to our camp again!"

"Miss Margaret, do put on your blue dress, and the white roses in your hair, for young Mister Richard's got home, and brought the handsomest young gentleman with him!" exclaimed old Mrs. Eaton, putting her head inside the door of Madge's room.

"Isn't it shameful, Amanda, to be obliged to dress for tea this hot summer night? I shan't do it, I'm confident! If a hundred 'Sir Richards' were here, I shouldn't trouble myself to 'dress up' for them. Let's go down in these cool wrappers! It's nobody but Dick; and as for his friend, of course neither you nor I care anything about him!"

When the tea-bell rang, aunt Elsie, uncle Ben, Richard and his friend, were soon in the cool dining-room; but the two girls lingered up stairs.

"Deary me! why don't the girls come down? Betty! Betty! here, call Margaret and Mandy," said aunt Elsie.

"Sit down, boys; sit down! we'll wait for 'em. Most likely Madge's rigging on her extra finery!" added uncle Ben, good-humoredly.

Just then the door opened—and, in plain, loose wrappers, hair combed plainly behind their ears—and, as aunt Elsie afterward said, "Looking terrible shiftless-like," entered Miss Madge Brandon and Amanda Peabody.

"Richard, boy, you haven't forgotten Madge? and this is Miss Peabody," began uncle Ben.

But the ceremony of introduction was quite set at naught by both the young gentlemen, who, very awkwardly, in rising, as if to acknowledge said ceremony, upset both teacups and contents, each one looking the personification of amazement the while; and, very singularly also, Miss Madge and her companion, blushing scarlet, sunk into their seats with similar confusion on their faces.

A few hours later, while the whole group sat in the starlight on the piazza, uncle Ben was checked in his teasing of the young people by aunt Elsie, who slyly beckoned him away.

"La, don't be a-teasing the children with your questions, father!" she exclaimed, as she inveigled the old gentleman into the keeping room. "Young folks will be young folks—and they like frolics, and capers, and such like. You see it's nothing more nor less than this, father: Richard and this young friend of his were over to Alton, boarding for a few weeks, and Henry Winstead saved 'Mandy from drownin' when she got overset in the river—and, jest for the frolic of it, they all went by made-up names. And now it's kind o' awkward for 'em to find it out, 'specially for Richard and Margaret, who've known each other all their lives. Declare, father, who'd a thought they'd a changed so in jest these four years? Guess you and I, father, hadn't best plot nor plan any more for 'em! They'll do their own fallin' in love, I'm thinkin', if we leave 'em to themselves!"

"Well, well, s'pose you're right, mother—women always are!" said uncle Ben, good-humoredly; "but they've burnt their own fingers this time, I reckon. I begin to see through it all. Sly witch—Madge is! Plotting and planning—plotting and planning—I'll give it up. Come, let's go in, mother!"

SUCH A MAN!

BY MARY E. CLARKE.

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pg. 37

SUCH A MAN!

BY MARY E. CLARKE.

"Oh! such a man!—such a man!" cried my niece, May Ellis, bursting like a stray sunbeam into my room, one summer's afternoon.

"Who?" I asked, looking up from my sewing to the laughing, blue eyes, tiny figure, and dancing curls of my pet. In an instant she put on a sober face, and said, with a comical affection of dignity,

"Dr. Edward Townsend," and she made a solemn bow.

"Your brother's friend?"

"Yes, Harry has just come from New York, where he accidentally encountered Dr. Townsend, and he has brought him out here on a visit, limits of said visit not mentioned. Oh! auntie, you should see him. Tall as a church steeple, taller than Harry, (and he's tall enough,) and with about as much grace as an elephant on a tight-rope!"

"May! May!" cried an impatient voice in the entry, followed by a tap at my door.

"I'm out, auntie!" whispered May, crouching behind my chair.

"Come in," I said, in answer to the knock, not May: and Harry Ellis, May's brother, came in.

"I thought May was here," he said, glancing round the room; "she ran away after Edward came in, and I thought she came up here!"

A suppressed laugh betrayed the merry girl, and Harry caught her in his arms, and lifted her from her nest in the corner, behind my chair.

"Let me go!" she said, struggling.

"What do you deserve for running away?" was the laughing reply, and Harry released her, saying, "Do come down stairs, that's a darling!"

"To see that long, stiff man? Excuse me! Oh! Harry, where did you pick him up?"

"I will tell you, sister," said the young man, gravely. "When I lay ill of yellow fever in New Orleans, without one friend to give me even a cup of water, the gentleman who occupied the room next mine, although a stranger, remained in that plague-stricken city till I was able to leave it without him, nursing me with a physician's skill, and woman's gentleness. I owe him a debt of gratitude, and I ask my sister to help me pay it, by treating him with attention whilst he is my guest."

"I will come. I'll be done in five minutes. I forgot how kind he had been to you, but I won't forget it again," and tears stood in May's eyes.

Harry went down again, and, in a few minutes, May and I followed him.

When introduced to Dr. Townsend, I scarcely wondered at my merry niece's description. His tall figure, thin and angular, was set off by clothes of the coarsest broadcloth, fitting him as "a purser's shirt does a handspike," to use Harry's comparison. His feet were large, and seemed constantly in the wrong place, while a shock of very curly, very unruly black hair, did not add to the beauty of a pale, sad face. His bow was awkward, and his speech constrained; yet, in spite of all his disadvantages, I felt drawn toward the man. There was a depth of melancholy in his large, black eyes that told of early trouble, and yet the smile which shot over his face, when May made one of her comical speeches as I came in, revealed even, white teeth, and fairly transfigured the sad face. His mouth evinced sensitiveness and refinement, in spite of the awkward manners.

May seemed anxious to show Harry her penitence, and to atone for the forgetfulness of the doctor's devotion to her brother. Seated beside their guest, on the sofa, she chatted in her graceful, easy manner, on many subjects, undismayed by short, often absent-minded answers. He was looking from the window with a sad, earnest gaze at the Hudson, flowing at some distance from us, yet visible through the foliage. The sun was setting, and everything spoke of peaceful quiet, and silence had fallen on all our group. My sister and her husband were absent on a trip to Niagara, and I was keeping house for them, so I stole out from the parlor to see to the tea-table, leaving the young trio bathed in golden sunlight. I looked back on the group as I left the room. May, with her snowy drapery and delicate beauty, between those two black-haired, tall men, looked like some fairy or graceful child who had come on a passing visit to mortals.

After tea we all assembled again in the parlor, and lamps were discarded by a unanimous vote. May sat down at the piano, and Dr. Townsend

took a seat beside me. Gay polkas and lively songs followed one after another, till the summer twilight faded away, and the moon rose slowly; then silence fell again on our group. In one corner, near the open window, I could see my pet, looking out thoughtfully; the moonlight falling full upon her tiny white figure. Some beside me watched her too. A low strain of sweet, sad music rose on the still air; at first with only one hand touching the keys, May played, then a deep, solemn bass swelled the strain, and I knew that my darling had forgotten the presence of a stranger, and was talking, as she often did, through the medium of sweet sounds. I looked at the sad, grave man beside me. His face was hidden in his hands, his form bent, and I mentally wondered how he could sleep with such music near him. One glorious nocturn succeeded another, and tears were filling my eyes at the pathos of the last, when crash came the white keys, and May sprang up, crying,

"Have I set all present to sleep?"

The doctor looked up. I had wronged him; he had not been asleep; his eyes and the quivering of his lip showed how the music had moved him.

May took a low seat at my feet.

"Tell me," she said, looking into the doctor's face, "what are you thinking about?"

He smiled a sweet smile, as if upon a child.

"I was thinking," he said, gravely, "how much Harry was blessed in his sister."

May looked wonder-stricken. A compliment from this solemn man!

"Such music," he continued, "carries me away from earth, and I can almost fancy I heard my mother's voice, whispering words of heavenly comfort to the son she left in infancy. You, who have a happy home, loving parents and friends, can scarcely fancy how one, homeless, almost friendless, an orphan without brother or sister, longs for an assurance that one gone before may sometimes hover near him, pitying and comforting."

Was it my blythe, merry May who answered?

"Believe it, earnestly believe it," she said, lifting her sweet face to his, "God, in His infinite mercy, cannot mean to leave any of His creatures so lonely, and yet deprive them of the hope of meeting hereafter. What were heaven to your mother, could she know her son lonely and sad, and not comfort him? Believe every happy thought, every good impulse, to be the whispering of your mother's spirit to yours."

His hand fell upon her curls.

"Thank you," he said, earnestly.

"What mischief are you two inventing?" cried Harry, from his sofa in a far off dark corner of the room.

"Mischief!" cried May, with one of her silvery laughs; "be sure if it was mischief you would be drawn over here by magnetic attraction."

Harry took his seat on the piano stool, and sang the first bar of a comical duet he had learned with May.

From her low seat she took up the strain, throwing aside all serious thoughts, and giving the music an arch, merry significance as she ever and anon shot laughing glances at Dr. Townsend at the last line.

"How could you ever dare to think
I'd marry such a man!"

She trilled out the last word, and, springing up, joined Harry.

"Dr. Townsend, come to this window!" she cried, "and see the river and the moonlight. Don't it make you feel poetical?" she asked as he joined her.

"Poetical!" cried Harry. "Of course.

Oh! moon, moon, moon,
Don't leave us very soon.

There, what do you think of that for an impromptu? Come, Edward, let's have a cigar!" and he stepped from the window into the garden.

"Don't trouble yourself to apologize for leaving us," muttered May, pettishly, as she came back to me. "Come, auntie, let's go to bed. I've done my duty, and had enough of that gawky man for one evening."

Day after day went by, and still Dr. Townsend was our visitor.

"Harry," said May, one day, "is not your friend very poor? His clothes are so coarse, even his linen is coarse, and he wears no studs, and has a plain, old-fashioned silver watch."

"That is Edward's only fault," said Harry, who never called his friend Ned, one would as soon have thought of addressing Gen. Washington as "old boy."

"I am afraid he is mean. His practice in New York is excellent, and yet he works like a slave, and seems to save every cent after providing the merest necessaries. He rents two rooms. His office is comfortable, because he must see some patients there; but his bed-room has no carpet, a poor cot bed, and the meanest furniture; yet his income is ample."

"I hate mean people!" said May, energetically; and just at that moment the doctor entered. He heard her remark, for the hot blood flooded his usually pale face, and his natural awkwardness seemed increased, as he stood there, uncertain if he ought to come in.

"Miss Mary," said the servant, coming to the

door at that instant, "there's a woman in the kitchen wants to see you."

I went down, May following me, glad to escape after her unlucky speech. An Irish woman was in the kitchen, who accosted me,

"Av ye plase, marm, I'm the woman that was doing some claning for Mrs. Ellis, whin they moved out here in the spring, and I came to ax for a little help. The ould man's down very bad, marm, with the fall he got off the railway, and he hasn't done a hand's turn this three weeks. We'd a starved intirely, marm, av it hadn't been for the docther."

"What doctor?" asked May.

"Meeself doesn't know, Miss; but he stopped in one day, a couple o' weeks back, to rest, and he said Michael's leg wasn't set right at all, and the blessed man! he althered it somehow, and gave me some stuff for the baby that's teething, and he's stopped in every day, marm; but sure he's done so much it's meeself that's 'shamed to ask any more, marm."

"Is he a tall young man, with black hair?"

"Yees; and the gentle hand and sweet voice for throuble an' sickness, Miss."

May left me; and, after the woman had gone, I found her in my room. Her face was flushed, and her hand trembled as she laid it in mine.

"And he heard me call him mean," she said to me, with great tears in her eyes.

That evening, the music was sad and sweet, and May's manner to our guest gentle, respectful, almost humble, in her sincere penitence.

I came into the parlor suddenly the next day, and found Dr. Townsend seated on the sofa, his head bent, his form, attitude, all expressing an extremity of sorrow. Harry had gone to New York, on business, and I had thought the doctor was with him. I am an old woman, and he was very young compared to me; so, taking my age and sex as privileges, I crossed the room softly, and, laying my hand on the bowed head, said,

"My friend, what grieves you?"

Apparently he was in that stage of sorrow that catches at sympathy, for he did not resent my question, but said, in a low, broken tone,

"Only one sorrow more added to a life-time of trouble."

"You are too young to speak so despondently," I said, taking a seat beside him. "Come, I am the confidant of all my young friends, tell me some of this trouble."

The answer came, almost in a sob.

"I love your niece—love her as a man loves but once in his life."

"Well," I answered, thinking of many conversations I had had with May, "I don't think your case is desperate."

"I cannot marry! I cannot ask any one to bear my name! You will not betray my confidence, so I will tell you who I am. My name is not Townsend. I am the son of a man who died, six years ago, in France; who fled from his country for forgery. By rigid economy, I paid, the day before I came here, the last dollar of the money debt; but the shame—the shame remains."

"You paid the sum for which he—"

"Forged another's name! Say it; I am used to hearing it; when I paid each month toward the sum, I always heard it," he said, bitterly.

"And you love my niece?"

"Fondly and truly; but hopelessly. I cannot ask her to marry me."

"How if she comes without asking?" said a low, sweet voice at his elbow.

I had seen May come in, when he first began to speak, but I thought it better not to interrupt him. He started as she spoke, and involuntarily opened his arms. May sprang into them with a burst of tears, and I left them together.

They have been married a month; and my darling tells me that she is daily thankful that her husband is *such a man as he is.*

THE BROKEN IDOL.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

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THE BROKEN IDOL.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

So my brother was married.

The news of this approaching change in our lives came upon me suddenly, but that was not Geoffry's fault, it was unexpected to himself. A friend whom he had known and loved from boyhood died in one of the Southern states, and upon his death-bed he sent for my brother to come to him, urging a plea which Geoffry held as sacred.

I was very lonely during his absence. We had not been separated for more than a day in years and years, and it was very hard to part with him, perhaps for months, but I could not urge him to disregard the request of a dying friend. So I remained in our quiet home during the whole spring, and late into the summer. Geoffry wrote to me as frequently as his occupations would permit him, but he was very busy, for Mr. Wardon died soon after his arrival, and his affairs were left in a terribly unsettled state. He was a widower with an only daughter—poor girl! at scarcely seventeen she was left alone in the world to endure reverses and misfortunes, she, who from her cradle had been so petted and indulged, that her life had been more like one of the fairy tales Geoffry used to love, than a real existence. My brother wrote much about her—I was glad to see that he was interested in her, for I pitied the poor child left to the mercies of calculating and worldly relatives, who seemed to blame her for her father's misfortunes. I felt certain that, before his return, Geoffry would do everything for her comfort, for a kinder, more gentle man never breathed; and it was the hope of saving something for her from the wreck of Mr. Wardon's vast fortune that detained him so long from home.

He returned at last. I had expected to find him depressed and worn-out, but, in spite of an evidence of fatigue, there was a look in his face which I had not seen for years; a joyous exultation in his eyes, such as used to shine there in his boyish days. His greeting was even more affectionate than usual, for he was singularly quiet and undemonstrative, but mingled with it there was a shyness for which I could not account. He talked even more than was his wont, but not in his natural manner; he kept aloof from every allusion to himself—and

once, when I asked some question concerning the poor orphan whom he had left, he seemed not to hear me; though when I glanced at his face, a moment after, it was crimson to his forehead, fading in an instant to a painful white, after an old boyish habit he had when much excited.

All that evening, as we sat by the cheerful fire, which I had ordered kindled, knowing well his fancy for the odor of the fir boughs, I felt that a restraint had sprung up between us which never before existed. How it pained me my poor words could never describe! For years Geoffry had been all the world to me, ever since when I was a young woman, and he an affectionate boy; when a great trouble came upon me, worse than the loss of our mother—a trouble which dashed my youth from me and left me solitary upon the strand of life; but it is Geoffry's history, not mine, that I am writing. I only meant to tell how dear the boy—I called him so still—had grown to me; how I, deprived of all hope, had learned to feel that his hopes and aspirations were mine, so that this first and unexpected shadow which had come between our souls, filled me with sorrow and unrest.

I was busy with my knitting, and found ample opportunity to watch Geoffry during the broken conversation, now moving uneasily in his chair, speaking quickly and with an effort, then lapsing anew into silence.

It was almost midnight, and I said something about going to my room.

"Wait a moment, Elizabeth," he almost whispered.

I sat down again, relieved by the thought that he was about to break through this reserve—even painful tidings could have been less bitter than my brother's unnatural manner.

Geoffry moved the lamp behind a little screen, so that the only light in the end of the room where we sat came from the smouldering fir cones. My brother was silent again. A momentary flame shot up from the hot embers and cast its reflection upon his features, then died down with a sharp crackle like an accent of pain.

"What is it, Geoffry?" I asked, unable to bear longer that irksome suspense. *

"I have something to tell you, sister—it will surprise you, but I hope you will not feel pained, for my happiness is vitally concerned in the issue of the affair."

Some dim perception of his meaning shot across my mind; I felt myself tremble, but answered calmly,

"Tell me; I never in my life heard a cruel word from your lips, I am not afraid now."

"I have written you much about Bessie Wardon, but there is one thing I have not told you: I love her, I have asked her to be my wife, and she has consented."

He began hesitatingly: but when he finished speaking his face was a glow, and his voice clear and exulting. For an instant I could not answer; the blow was terribly sudden! For so long he had been my all; I was seven years older than he, and on her death-bed my mother committed him to my care. I was only eighteen then, but I fulfilled my promise; even the rendering up of my life-hope had been a duty forced upon me by difficulty in regard to him—but that he never knew.

As soon as I could speak I did; I could not bear to trouble the anxious heart I saw darkening in his eyes. I rose from my seat and went toward him, parted the hair back with a familiar caress, and kissed his forehead.

"May you be happy," I found strength to say; "no prayers for your future welfare will be so fervent as those of your sister."

He threw his arms round me with an impulsive passion very unusual with him, and kissed me many times.

"I was so afraid that you would be displeased—pained."

"At that which promises you happiness?"

"Always unselfish! You will love her, Elizabeth, you will care for her—so young, so petted—won't you?"

"Trust me, Geoffry."

"I can—I do!"

Then we began to talk more quietly. Geoffry told me how, years since, he had given up all thoughts of marriage, that even during the fanciful season of youth no woman had ever come near his heart. Even to himself it seemed very strange that this thing should have come about. He only knew that from the first moment he saw her, this young girl had twined herself about his heart, that even in the midst of that grief and desolation the feeling had increased, until it held entire possession of his strong, manly nature. After a time, he told me the whole story collectedly, though I could see by the tremor in his voice, and the nervous move-

ments of his hands, what an unwonted excitement agitated him.

When he reached Mr. Wardon's residence, he found him near death, but perfectly sensible of his state, and able to converse upon his affairs. The only thing that troubled him was leaving his daughter unprovided for, but when with the quick perceptions of parental affection he perceived the impression which had been produced upon Geoffry's heart, he was the first to allude to their union. How the matter was really settled my brother could scarcely tell; it had all passed like a dream—he only knew that Louise Wardon had accepted him as her husband, and that six months after her father's death they were to be married.

A thousand trifles which Geoffry related of her made me tremble with an undefined fear; I was never more than a plain, simple body, but the great love I bore Geoffry rendered me clear-sighted. I felt that this girl was an impulsive, warm-hearted child, who as yet understood nothing of her own nature, or what would contribute to her happiness. She was so young still—only seventeen—and my brother, although he was to me like a boy still, had passed his fortieth birth-day. I felt how full of doubts was the future they were about to take upon themselves, but I was weak and timid, and dared not pain Geoffry by hinting of these things, so I shut them up in my own heart for secret thought and prayer.

Then as I looked at his face, which, though it had lost the brightness of youth, was stamped with a manly serenity far more noble and beautiful, it seemed impossible that she should not respect and love him. I had never seen any man who was his equal, and surely that young girl would soon feel this and reverence him accordingly.

So I bade him good night as cheerfully as I could and went to my room. I wept a little, but I remembered how selfish it was, and prayed for strength to resist that unholy feeling. My brother would be so cheerful and happy, and that girl would make the sunshine of our home. If she would only love me—that was my great fear—I was so still and retiring, few people ever did learn to know me, or understand how I craved affection from those about me.

Our house was a pleasant one, only a couple of hours' ride from a pleasant city; and we were possessed of more than sufficient wealth to gather about us everything that could minister to the comfort and happiness of any one.

Days and weeks passed on. My brother was busy in planning and superintending a thousand

little alterations and additions in the house which would please his young bride's fancy, and I never saw anything more lovely and complete than the suite of rooms he fitted up for her especial use.

The autumn passed quickly—and late in October my brother left again for the South. They were to be married immediately upon his arrival; and, if the weather continued fine, would pass several weeks in traveling. I was grieved that I could not be present at my brother's wedding, but I had not been strong for a long time, and they would not allow me to undertake the journey. So I remained alone in our pleasant home, occupying myself as much as possible in order to pass the time. It was very lonely, but I knew that it was as well I should in part be prepared for the future, since I could never again hope for the undivided companionship which I had found with my brother.

Geoffry wrote me that they were married—the wedding was strictly private, for Bessie was, of course, in deep mourning. With my brother's letter came a tiny note from the dear girl herself, the sweetest, most child-like billet it is possible to imagine. I am given to all manner of fanciful conceits, and I could but think that I saw in my new sister's writing a certain force of obstinacy and wilfulness, mingled with the impulsive, hurriedly formed characters.

They reached home at last, about three weeks after their marriage. It was evening when they arrived, and I had made the old house as cheerful as possible with lamps and fires. I sat down in the library—Geoffry's favorite room—in impatient expectation, which I strove in vain to subdue. At last I heard the carriage, which had been sent to meet them at the station, and hurried into the hall. In an instant the outer door opened, and my brother entered with his young wife leaning upon his arm.

I was faint from excess of emotion; I must have appeared almost cold from repressed agitation, for when I kissed Bessie and bade her welcome, she glanced timidly at Geoffry as if for protection.

When her wraps were removed, and we were seated at the dinner-table, I could but acknowledge to myself that Geoffry had been guilty of no lover-like exaggeration in his description of her. It was not that her features were faultless, but the expression was varying and full of beauty; her clear complexion so changing in its hue, that her face possessed a charm I never saw equalled. Her hair was black, and folded back from her forehead in shining waves; but her eyes were a deep violet blue, growing purple

with the slightest emotion. Her form, like that of most Southern girls, was too thin for perfect symmetry, but there was a grace and pliancy about her movements which amply atoned for the defect. After the first hour she talked a great deal, but in an artless, childish way, which made me at once smile and pity her.

I could see that Geoffry worshiped her—that he had made his affection a sinful idolatry, and that pained me. I had never seen him so gay since his boyhood; he laughed aloud many times at her pretty sallies; and she purred around him like a pet kitten, evidently somewhat in awe of his manner, which even then was much more quiet than persons usually are, yet unable to repress the girlish buoyancy of spirits which even sorrow had been unable to subdue.

"We have not shown those pretty new rooms, Geoffry," I said, during a momentary pause in the conversation. "Would you like to see your own special haunt, Mrs. Harding?"

She started and looked round as if wondering whom I addressed, then recovered herself with such a pretty laugh.

"Oh! you mean me! I never shall get used to the name; please don't call me by it—papa called me Bess, and puss, and mouse. Just make your own choice, but don't put me so far off with cold names."

The words were nothing, but her manner was irresistible; from that time she was never called by either of us anything but some pet name, and yet neither Geoffry nor I were given to the habit. She was delighted with her rooms, which were in a wing of the house, and separated from the library by a wide hall.

"I shall be as happy as a bird here," she said, "and do nothing but sing all day long; and you must sing too, grave Mr. Geoffry. I know our sister Elizabeth likes to be useful, and she will manage the house so nicely—shan't you?"

I should like to have seen anybody who could say no to her; it was not in my power, nor in Geoffry's either, for that matter!

So I went to my room that night very happy. My fears were all gone; our sunbeam would brighten our hearts and our home—poor little daisy! I knew she meant that it should be so too.

Before the next day was over, she was as much at home in the house as if she had lived there all her life, flying about hither and thither, dragging Geoffry and myself after her, even into the kitchen—the first time she had ever entered one—and delighting the old cook's heart by her wonderment at the rows of polished tins which were Barbara's chief pride.

I saw at once that the little fairy had no idea of occupation, or a profitable employment of her time—she was as useless as a hummingbird, and just as graceful. She would call her black girl, Julia, to pick up a handkerchief which lay within her own reach; and as for doing the slightest thing for herself, she never even dreamed that it was possible.

Oh! how delightful those few weeks were! We were too happy—it was sinful, but we did not mean it so. One morning she came into my room. Geoffry had been called to town, and she could not bear to be alone.

"I must stay with you, besides I have a thousand things to say."

I was only too happy to have her society; and she nestled down on the rug at my feet, leaning her head against my knee, and pulling my work-basket all awry while she chatted away.

"I am not going to be so idle any more," she went on, "Geoffry talked to me about it last night. He wants me to read, and study, and have masters—he is so dreadfully wise! I am such an ignorant thing, oh! you can't think, I never would study," and she shook her head mischievously. "But I shall now, you'll see! I want to make Mr. Harding happy, and you, and everybody. You won't mind showing me how, will you?"

I was not likely to refuse, little darling!

"It seems so strange to be married—you can't think! Not that I am so young, either," she added, drawing herself up, "I am turned seventeen! But then papa made such a baby of me—dear, dear papa! He wanted me so much to marry his friend—I was frightened at the bare idea—how I cried! But I am very happy now; yes, very."

How every word she spoke pained me! Poor, ignorant child! she knew no more of herself, or of life than a babe.

The very next day, Bessy began the course of study which her husband laid out for her. He procured the best drawing and music masters, and himself directed her in a variety of lessons which he desired her to pursue. For a short time Bessie was a very diligent scholar, and Geoffry was greatly encouraged. I saw that it could not last; Bessie had no perseverance, and no patience. Soon the drawing hurt her side, practicing the piano-forte made her fingers ache. She had a good ear, would catch any air that pleased her fancy, and sang like a wild bird; but to pass a regular number of hours, each day, at the instrument, was utterly impossible for her.

Not more than a month passed before, with

tears and prayers, Bessie persuaded Geoffry into sending off her music-teacher, and soon the luckless instructor of drawing followed.

"Ugh!" said Bessie, watching the last named individual as he went down the avenue; "I feel as if I had got rid of a nightmare—I shall hate pictures all my life."

Geoffry shook his head and tried to look grave; but she would make him laugh, and twisted her shoulders to show him how frightfully deformed she should have become, and he was forced to submit to her whims with a good grace.

Not more than a week passed before my brother's patience was put to a severe test. I went into the library one morning and found Bessie crying in the window seat, and Geoffry standing by the table in the middle of the room eyeing the soiled books ruefully, and occasionally glancing at his wife, as if at a loss what was to be done next.

The moment Bessie saw me she broke out into sobs.

"He is very cruel to me," she cried; "you oughtn't to let him treat me so, Elizabeth—it's barbarous, so it is!"

"Why, Bessie, dear," Geoffry began, but she would not listen.

"Don't say a word! I'm going right home! I didn't get married to go to school; papa didn't make me, and nobody else shall."

Between the pair it was difficult to arrive at the bottom of the matter; but it seemed nothing more serious than an attempt on Geoffry's part to make her more diligent. I softened affairs, and finally reconciled Bessie to life again.

"You dear, good Elizabeth!" she said, kissing me, and then flying off to Geoffry again.

"And I needn't study any more? You don't want to make your poor mouse unhappy! Just put those horrid books out of sight, Elizabeth, that's a dear."

So ended Geoffry's efforts to make his wife a learned woman. I urged him never to attempt that sort of thing again—he might as well have tried to teach a wild pigeon metaphysics!

After that Bessie took a fancy to be useful, and worried the cook nearly to death with her efforts to become a housewife, but that was a very fleeting fancy. Then she was anxious to assist me in my Sunday-school; but the mischievous boys made her laugh in spite of her attempts to be dignified.

So she grew quiet for a time, but seeming very happy in her quaint, bird-like way. They were absent from home for a few weeks during the winter, and on their return I could see that

Bessie had changed since her marriage. She was growing more womanly and quiet, still very thoughtless and child-like; but I saw in her the germ of the perfect woman, if she could only be directed aright.

I do not know if Geoffry was disappointed in his married life. Certainly his wife was no companion for him, but she had won his heart completely; and if he desired something more in her than he found, he never permitted an expression of that want to escape his lips.

I began to think that my fears had been groundless, and that, in spite of the disparity of years and dissimilarity of characters, they would still be happy, that they would be so was enough of earthly content for me.

Sometimes I wished that Geoffry and I could be gayer and younger; she must have had hours of loneliness but she bore up very well, her little fits of petulance giving way before the slightest promise of amusement. The winter wore on, and still all seemed well with us; so I sat down in the sunshine of the present, and forgot to look for shadows which might lie in the dimness beyond.

A year of their married life passed. Bessie was eighteen years old. Her father had now been dead nearly two years, and, toward winter, she took off her mourning. We invited more company to the house than ever before, and tried our best to make it cheerful and pleasant for her. I was astonished to see how eagerly she entered into every sort of amusement, she had seemed so quiet in our solitude. But that was a peculiarity of Bessie's disposition; she was easily influenced by her surroundings, so facile of impressions that she appeared to take her opinions from those at the time near her. She was passionately fond of the theatre and the opera; and they used to spend a week in town, going out every night either to parties or places of amusement.

I doubt if Geoffry much enjoyed the unusual excitement; but it would have been wrong to have deprived Bessie of all pleasure at her age, he was too gentle and self-sacrificing ever to think of it.

None of Bessie's relatives had visited her; indeed she had no near ones, and even from those she possessed, her father had been, for many years, partially estranged. The only one she appeared to remember, with any degree of attachment, was a step-son of a deceased aunt, a young man who had been traveling for several years in Europe. Bessie knew that he was soon expected to return home, and looked forward to his arrival with much pleasure. Although he

was not in reality a relation, she had always been taught to consider him as such, and, during a number of years, had been very intimate.

Bessie's account of him did not please me. She appeared always to have yielded to him in everything, and, from her account, I could see that he had been a bold, strong-spirited boy, full of faults which, if no change had come over him, must have rendered him a dangerous, loosely principled man.

One day Geoffry had gone into town, and we were left alone; and, as it was near the time she expected to hear of his arrival, we naturally conversed a good deal concerning him.

It was dark. Geoffry returned; we had not heard the carriage, and he entered the library before we were aware, followed by a stranger.

"Bessie!" Geoffry said, "won't you welcome your cousin?"

Bessie had been eyeing the gentleman with a puzzled look, but at the words she sprang joyfully forward.

"Butler Hamilton! Oh! I am so happy to see you! Have you just come? How changed you are! I am so, so glad!"

"And I, too," he answered, in the sweetest voice I ever heard. "But you have grown out of all recognition, only the old smile is there."

"And the old heart, too!" she exclaimed, in her impulsive way, which contrasted strangely with his polished air.

Mr. Hamilton was presented to me, and his manner was, what it was to every other lady, courteous in the extreme—the demeanor of a man who felt favored.

It appeared he had met Geoffry, and made himself known to him, and had, of course, been at once invited to the house.

Bessie was radiant with delight, and altogether the evening passed pleasantly; but I—did not like Butler Hamilton.

He was a handsome man, but there was something in his smile from which I shrank. I could not trust him. He conversed well, and Geoffry was pleased to listen to him; altogether I saw that he liked the young man.

I do not know why it was, but when I found he was to pass a week at the house I felt anxious and troubled, but I said nothing; it would have been an insult to Bessie to have done so.

Mr. Hamilton's visit lengthened to a fortnight. How it was I could not tell, but, before the time was up, I felt that a change had come over the whole house, an indefinable something which placed Bessie at a certain distance from me and from all the rest.

At the end of the fortnight, my brother and

his wife went down to the city with their guest, and remained there for more than a week. When they came back, Mr. Hamilton had gone South, for a visit, but was to return soon.

Bessie had passed a gay week, and she described to me all her enjoyment; but there was a certain discontented restlessness about her I had never seen before. She complained of the loneliness and dullness of the house, and was anxious to spend the winter in town. Geoffrey objected, solely on the score of her health; she had always been delicate, and he feared the effects that such continual excitement would have upon her constitution. She submitted, after a time, and appeared sorry for her petulance; but still I felt that the shadows had crept into our home, and it would be long before any after sunshine could restore the brightness of the past.

In December, Mr. Hamilton came North again. He was much at our house, and indeed we had altogether a great deal of gay company. Geoffrey's health was not very good that winter, and often when Bessie had set her heart upon going into town, to spend the evening, Mr. Hamilton would be called upon to take her. I disliked that proceeding more than all the rest of the goings on, but it was not for me to speak.

Someway I gradually grew of less importance in the house. Geoffrey was constantly occupied with his wife and his new friend, Mr. Hamilton; and Bessie had so many new plans of amusement, that she found little time for the pleasant visits she was formerly in the habit of making to my chamber.

One morning she came in for a moment, to speak with me about some household affair. She held several books in her hand. I asked what they were.

"Only novels," she said, coloring a little; "it improves my French to read them."

One of them dropped from her hold, and fell at my feet: it was a book of George Sand's, that I knew well by reputation; full of hollow sophistries, false doctrines, bad morality, all garlanded and hidden by the power of transcendent genius, like serpents sleeping beneath a bed of flowers.

"Oh! Bessie!" I exclaimed, "dear Bessie, don't read this!"

"What nonsense!" she said, laughing. "You know nothing about the book; you never read novels."

"Where did you find it?"

"Mr. Hamilton gave—that is, I picked it up in the library, where he had laid it."

I was silent with mingled grief and indignation. I had not been mistaken in that man.

He had laid a deep plot against my darling's happiness, and these dangerous books, artfully put in her way, were part of his plan.

"Bessie," I said, earnestly, "don't read this book, I beg, I entreat!"

I spoke with such unusual vehemence, that she was a little startled.

"Why! where can be the harm? You are such a puritan, Elizabeth!"

"Call me what you please, but don't read that book."

"There, then," she exclaimed, petulantly, flinging the other volumes toward me, "do what you like with them. It seems that I am to be deprived of every amusement."

She left the room before I could answer. I felt that it was not Bessie who spoke—I heard only the echo of that bad man's teachings and insinuations.

I was troubled and perplexed. What course to pursue I knew not. I could only wait, sitting down in passive suffering for the present.

So matters went. I think it was the latter part of February that my brother was forced to leave home, for five or six weeks. He was going on urgent business to the interior of Pennsylvania, and the journey would have been so uncomfortable for her, that he never for an instant thought it possible.

The night before he went he came into my room, and sat for some time. He was very much depressed, and, when I looked closely at his face, I saw a pained, anxious look, that had been gathering there, like a cloud, during the past few weeks.

"I never so dreaded a journey in my life," he said, after a long silence; "if I were superstitious I should think it a presentiment of evil."

Now I was superstitious, and his words made me shiver.

"Is it impossible for you to put it off?" I asked, nervously.

"Impossible! Those coal mines must be attended to; any farther delay might be the means of embarrassing us."

"I wish Bessie and I could go with you."

"The journey would be too unpleasant—you are both so delicate. Take good care of Bessie, Elizabeth; it cuts me to the heart to leave her."

There was a short silence which I could not break.

"Sister," he said, suddenly, "have you noticed any change in our darling?—do you believe that she is happy?"

"She ought to be," I said.

"Yes; I have done my best by her—I pro-

mised her father! Poor little flower! I hope she does not regret it."

He leaned his forehead on his hand, and looked into the fire. How pale and wan he looked!

"Mr. Hamilton leaves in a day or two," I remarked.

Geoffry glanced strangely at me.

"Yes. Do you like him, Elizabeth? I believe he is an upright man—yes, I believe he is."

I made no answer, and the subject dropped. Soon after he bade me good night, and went away.

"Take care of Bessie," he repeated several times; "I leave her in your hands."

When he left, the next morning, I was surprised at the violence of Bessie's emotion. She clung to him, begging him to take her, and, when he at last drove away, fell back, almost fainting, in my arms.

She spent most of the day in bed; but toward evening they brought up word that Mr. Hamilton was below, and we both went down. He remained to dinner, and spent the evening. Prejudiced as I was against him, I forgot it all. I knew now that he exerted all his powers to make me forget my suspicions concerning him, and he succeeded.

When he went away, he told us that some business would detain him in town for another week, and he so managed it that I was forced to invite him out the next day.

During the next week he was with us daily. I watched him narrowly, but how could I fathom his character? At the end of that time an acquaintance of Bessie's came up from town to claim a visit that had been promised weeks before. Geoffry had consented to her going, so that I could say nothing.

Bessie remained in the city for a fortnight, and it was not until I had written several urgent letters that she came back. I had not been well, and she was grieved.

"I am so sorry I left you, dear Elizabeth," she said; "but I will not again."

She clung to me, like a child imploring pardon. That evening we were very happy; but the next morning came Mr. Hamilton again.

"I thought he had gone," I said.

"He bade me good-hy, day before yesterday," replied Bessie, faintly; "something must have detained him."

She was pale and trembling; but it passed in an instant, and we went down stairs.

"Here still, you see," said Mr. Hamilton, gaily, as he shook hands with me. "My father

has written me that he is coming North; and like a dutiful son, I am awaiting his arrival."

I believed that to be a lie, and I think my face showed it. I caught Hamilton's eyes—I knew I had made an enemy. That afternoon I was so ill that I could not leave my chamber. In the evening I went to ask Bessie for her company a little while—she had gone out for a sleigh-ride with Mr. Hamilton.

The next morning, I determined to speak with Bessie, even at the risk of offending her. I spoke as gently as I could, but she turned upon me with a violence that alarmed me.

"My cousin was right," she exclaimed, passionately. "You and your brother wish to make me a mere slave. I must think, sleep, and breathe, only as you choose. I will not submit to such tyranny—you do not know me if you believe that I will."

She rushed out of the room before I could speak, and when I went to her door it was locked, nor would she answer me when I called. She would not see me either that day or evening. What I suffered, only one who has been placed in similar circumstances can imagine.

The next morning, as I was passing through the hall, I met Bessie's black girl with a note in her hand. She hid it as quickly as possible, but I saw that it was addressed to her mistress.

My mind was made up as to the course it was right for me to pursue. I sat down and wrote to my brother begging him to return; I gave no reason, only besought him to come home at once.

Bessie came down to dinner, but she was silent and haughty. Mr. Hamilton called while we were still at table, and she went immediately into the library. I followed after a time; Hamilton was holding her hands, and she was weeping convulsively. When they saw me, Bessie rushed out of the room sobbing aloud.

I sat down, and motioned Mr. Hamilton to sit also. I spoke plainly to him as Bessie's connection, and one who should be her best friend. He heard me through, looking full in my face, and sneering all the while.

"I am willing to believe that you mean well," he said, quietly, "but in your ignorance of the world you have insulted me grossly. I am like a brother to Bessie; it does not become her husband's sister to be the first to suspect her of wrong doing."

He left me with those words. For a time I sat there silent and stupefied. It might have been an hour after when I heard the outer door close—he had gone.

I went into the hall and met Bessie. She was very pale, but perfectly quiet; there was a look

in her face I had never seen there before. She came to me and took my hand.

"Good night, Elizabeth," she said; "don't be angry with me, you have been kinder than I deserve."

Her composure gave way, and for an instant she clung to me, sobbing fearfully; but when I besought her to have confidence in me, she pushed me off and ran into her own rooms, locking the door behind her.

There was nothing for it but to go up to my own chamber. It was now late, and the house perfectly quiet. Still I could not go to bed, but sat partially undressed by my fire, certain that nothing more could transpire that night, and yet haunted by a fear that was like a ghostly presence.

The clock struck twelve, one, and yet I sat there. Again the chimes rung out—it was two o'clock. As the sound died, I heard another noise echo faintly through the stillness—it came from below. I listened intently, but all was silent as the grave; the beat of my own heart was all I heard then.

I stood there perhaps five minutes—it was like the duration of eternity! I seized a shawl and ran down stairs. There was a little door leading from an empty room to Bessie's sitting-room, it might not be locked. I had no light, but seemed to find my way by instinct. I reached the door—it yielded to my touch, and I entered the room; it was empty, so was the sleeping apartment beyond.

"Bessie!" I called, frantically.

There was no answer—not a sound but my own hurried breath. A second of stupefied irresolution, and I sprang into the ante-room, the outer door was ajar. I ran out and fled down the avenue swifter than the wind.

I came in sight of the gates. They were open, a carriage stood before them, and in the misty moonlight I saw Butler Hamilton assisting a muffled figure in.

"Bessie," I screamed again.

I heard a stifled shriek from her, and a muttered curse from the man. As I reached the gate, Hamilton sprang into the carriage and called to the driver to go on.

"Bessie—Bessie," I cried, "don't—don't! Come back—come back."

"Let me out," I heard her frantically exclaim; "let me go to Elizabeth."

I heard Hamilton try to soothe her, but she wept bitterly. Something about the harness still detained the coachman.

"Go on!" repeated Hamilton, with an oath.

"Bessie," I groaned, "remember your father

—your dead father—he sees you—he pleads through me! Come back—there is still time—come back!"

I had my hand on the carriage door, but Hamilton resisted all my efforts. Bessie shrieked and fainted. At that moment the horses started forward; Hamilton pushed me back; I fell half fainting to the ground.

When consciousness came back, the carriage was out of sight. The winter wind whistled round me; the moon had set—a cold, gray light lay all around. I went back to the house and roused the only servant I could trust—a man who had grown old in our service. When I had seen him mount his horse and start in the direction they had taken, I went back to my room, and sat there by the dying coals till daylight.

What passed in the house after the servants were up I do not know. I heard a confusion—they came into my chamber—asked questions—I could only wave them off—I had no power to articulate.

All that day I sat there. Late in the evening Robert returned—he had no tidings.

Another day passed thus, and another. On the third night a carriage drove to the door—I knew my brother had returned. I tried to rise from my chair and go out to meet him, but my limbs refused their office, and I fell back like one paralyzed. I heard his step on the stairs—the door opened, I saw a pale face and wasted form like my brother's ghost.

He stood and looked at me. I tried to call out—in vain!

"She is gone," I heard him say.

I know that I muttered his words. Again I tried to rise, fell back and fainted. When I recovered, my brother was bending over me; I remembered then that it was my duty to console him. I prayed for strength, and the angels heard my prayer. There was little I could do! My brother was quiet; he heard my whole story; he never blamed me, perhaps I could have done no more than I had, I had tried to act for the best.

The next day Geoffry came down stairs, calm and still, but oh! the desolation in his face, the utter broken-heartedness in every look and word.

We did all that was possible, but we obtained no tidings. Bessie had left no letter—nothing. Few of her clothes were gone; only the things that had belonged to her before her marriage. Her black servant was gone also—I had not noticed her in my frenzied excitement.

Geoffry was absent from home during several days, but his search was in vain. He came back,

and we settled down again in a dreary sort of calm which was seldom broken.

Bessie's name never passed my brother's lips. I never alluded to her, although there was not a moment, night or day, when she was out of my thoughts. Geoffry's face never changed from the dreary desolation which had settled over it on his return.

We lived thus for five years; it would be useless to give any details of that period. My brother had grown quite an elderly man, his hair was quite gray; as for me, I had settled down into an old woman. I believe we did not neglect our duties—we tried to perform them all. If we were selfish in our sorrow, I believe that God forgave it; unintentional it was, mingled with a sort of remorse that our love for the lost one had been so near akin to worship.

How that text, "*Keep yourselves from idols*," rang in my mind. It was present to Geoffry also; not that he said so, but in his pocket Bible I found the words faintly underlined.

Five years! I believe that I had given up all thought of ever finding any trace of Bessie—after so long a time there could be no hope.

How startling events come upon us when we least expect them! It was the fifth anniversary of the child's loss. I had been for several hours in my room silently brooding over the past, and the blackness that spread between us and our past happiness.

Suddenly the door was flung open, and my brother stood before me holding an open letter. His mouth worked, but he could not speak. I seized the sheet and saw Bessie's writing.

It was a letter to me, and written from the South, the neighborhood of her old home.

"Come to me, Elizabeth. You will not refuse my dying prayer. I am here and alone. Truly my sin has found me out! I can look for no pardon here, perhaps none hereafter; but come to me before it is too late."

I know that when I had finished, we fell upon our knees and prayed aloud.

There was little consultation needed. By evening we were on our way. In a week we reached the village to which her letter had directed us. Bessie was living with an old servant of her family. From the woman we learned all the particulars that she knew.

Hamilton had forsaken Bessie in Europe, a year before, and she had found her way back to die near her old home.

The woman went up and told her that I was there.

"You won't be hard on her," she whispered.

Hard on her! I only longed to press her to

my heart once more, after that I could have died content.

I went up stairs. The woman opened the door, and I went into the chamber. Pale and wasted, Bessie sat in an-easy-chair; she struggled up, fell at my feet, clasping my knees with broken blessings and prayers.

"You have forgiven me," she gasped; "God will pardon me now. Elizabeth, oh! Elizabeth!"

I raised her and laid her upon the bed. After a time she was calm enough to talk.

"Geoffry," she moaned, "Geoffry!"

"Bessie, I am not here alone."

She started up in fear, clinging to me and trembling with a cold chill.

"He will curse me," she cried; "he will curse me!"

"There is no bitterness in his heart, Bessie. See him now, it is better."

After a time she consented, and I went out into the hall where my brother waited. I let him go in alone—it was night. What passed in that interview only they and the angels who listened ever knew; but when, two hours after, I stole into the room, my brother was seated upon the bed, Bessie's cheek rested on his shoulder—she was sleeping quietly as an infant. Geoffry raised his eyes to mine—I saw a silent thanksgiving in his face. For the first time he wept, but, oh! such blessed tears; dew from heaven could not have more brightened that crushed heart.

By the next day our plans were all arranged. Bessie was to return home with us as soon as she could travel—her only prayer was for that.

"Let me die there, it is all I ask, to die there!"

I know not if others would have acted as we did. Probably the world would have sneered at my brother's weakness, but his actions were ruled by a law higher than that of human beings. We went home—it was home again! God had been very good to us, our darling was restored.

At different times Bessie told me her sad story. Up to the very day of her departure she had had no idea of forsaking her husband. Hamilton persuaded her to go to her family—he half crazed her by his sophistries, that, from the moment she preferred him to her husband, she ought to go away. She did go, but not to a place of safety!

She must have suffered much during the four years she was with him, but she never complained.

As for the man, we heard afterward that he died in the Crimea. Perhaps he repented—at least it was not for us to judge him.

The quiet spring came on. Few will understand me, but those weeks were the happiest season of our lives. In May Bessie died in our arms, a bright, glorious morning. To the end she could speak—her last words were a blessing. There were no tears—we felt no sorrow!

In the family burial ground we laid our trea-

sure. From the windows of my room I can see her grave, with the summer sunlight slanting over it.

We sit there in the bright days of our quiet pleasure, and we know that before long kind hands will lay us by our darling's side, and that in the pure world beyond still we shall meet her never to be parted again.

THE BURNHAMS OF BOSCAWEN PLAIN: CHAPTER I.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L--'S DIARY."

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CHAPTER I.

June 3rd, 1856.

ROBIN sat to-night, holding his great medical book before him; sat crouching over it with faded eyes, talking of life; wondering why God made us—any of us—especially him and me, since we are none too happy here, and probably never will be; since he certainly did not need us, and probably never will need us; since the rest of the world, so far as we can see, would have the more room, the more to eat, and a more comfortable time, perhaps, if we were not in it. While I, who have far greater reason, never ask myself or another that question, not even when my troubles prey the closest. I have often wished that I could die, so that I might be done with trouble, done with sin, done with this earth; which, with all its nooks of peaceful aspect, seems to have no place of secure rest and joy for me. Then, alas! I have often been angry; so angry that I could have stamped; so angry that everything within me has cried out vehemently and hated. I have said, "I hate my father! Atlas on my shoulders would be no worse than his iron will fettering all my life!"

God forgive me! Especially if it is, in some way, possible for me to bear it patiently, and so not suffer and sin on account of it, as I sometimes think that it is.

At other times, for the most part, when I sit here in my own room, in the quiet summer evenings, I say to myself, as I said to-night to Robin, when he complained, "There is One who knows why, and all about it. He is greater, wiser than we are, and knows. Probably none of our earthly lives are the excellent passages He meant them to be; still means them to be, when we—the human race, I mean; or you and myself individually—can come to it. Probably he meant no part of this earth to be finally a Sahara; but a spot being for the present Sahara, the breeze that in the vale people call "the breath of evening or morning," that comes laden with odors and pleasant sounds, is called there the sirocco, and people bow down before it, or it beats them down and destroys them. Perhaps, for many a human soul, there is also a wide desert into which it

strays; where it wanders, suffers, and sometimes is utterly lost; where, at the most, the eye can only see an oasis now and then; now and then hear a bird singing afar off. Perhaps our souls—yours, Robin, and mine—are at the edges of this desert, so that they often enter it a little way, and are scorched and beaten."

When I paused, and Robin looked up with face silently inquiring how I came by my theory, I answered him with a lie; or, at any rate, with far less than half the truth. I said I had seen something of it in a book—and so I had; but the meaning I saw dimly enough until he, Mr. Mayfield, was here, and, with kindling tongue and eye, made it clearer to me—how the soul of the race, and the individual soul as well, is driven from its ultimate good, out of its childhood, its Paradise, where innocence is without reason, love without will or wisdom; how it has to make its own shifts, its own search, on its own oft-burning, oft-misguided feet, with its own outstretched, oft-trembling hand, its own oft-dimmed, oft-deluded eyes; how it, especially the soul of the race, moves slowly, hair-breadth by hair-breadth, so that perhaps the great dial of eternity has not yet struck the high meridian hour of the day that brings it to its new and better Paradise, its home.

"What book?" he asked.

I answered, "'The Way toward the Blessed Life.'"

He wished he could see it, he said, speaking thoughtfully. I wished he could, I told him; wished I could; but I had seen it only once, for a little while, and that was when I was away visiting. And that was all I owned to him. God forgive me! I fear I tell a great many lies, one way and another, if, as Paley says, "a lie is an intention to deceive," no more, no less. I will do a penance for this one, that shall help me when a new temptation comes. My heart shall bend to be smitten as conscience is inclined; I will say to Robin, the next time we meet, "Robin, I lied to you, the other evening, and have been sorry ever since." There he comes, now, in at the gate, up the path, I will meet him at the steps and tell him.

Later.

"I am glad you came, Robin," I said, pulling a snow-drop leaf, and facing him in the best way I could, with the leaf in my fingers, twirling it. "I told you a lie this evening, I, who, whichever way I look, back through the centuries, or over our own time in our own land, can see no true glory in any life that is not, at least, spiced with some sort of martyrdom. I told you a monstrous lie!"

He smiled, waiting for my explanation. I would have been saved giving it even then. Even the little I gave, was like giving the precious honey of my life, drop by drop out of the scanty store. I said "I didn't exactly get my ideas of the old Paradise and the new out of a book, as I told you I did. They are in 'The Way toward the Blessed Life,' but I didn't so much get them there as from—were you at home when that Philadelphia minister preached here?"

"Mayfield?"

"Yes; did you hear him?" And here, in ethical stringency, was another lie, inasmuch as I knew he was here. I remembered it perfectly; but it was not easy for me to get round my subject. I shrank; I put up the miserable subterfuge as a hiding-place.

"Yes, I was here. Don't you remember how we liked him? how we said we *lived* hearing him? You and Alice met him, I remember, when you were out walking. Alice told me, I remember, that he and Col. Chase were walking, and that, when they met you, they turned, and walked back with you. She said, I remember it now; she said that you and Mr. Mayfield talked of things—"

"I did not talk."

"That he then talked to you of things she couldn't begin to understand; and so she and Col. Chase listened sometimes, and the rest of the way planned a park, as if they had been in old England, she said, not here in the new, where there is no land to spare to beauty. I remember now. But when I asked you about it, afterward, I remember you said 'it was nothing.'"

"And it was not much, cousin Robin; only he spoke of these things, and compared them to Adam and Eve's being driven forth out of Eden, in a way to clear many things—such as the sin and suffering into which God permits us to fall—all up to my mind, and, as it were, make the world all over new to me. That was all, and indeed it was no light thing either. I did wrong when I said it was nothing. I have just done another wrong, in saying 'it was not much.' I do wrong, very often. I am discouraged about myself."

He stood, thoughtful and silent. I pulled off a half-dozen leaves, scattering them on the door steps. Before we, either of us, spoke again, I had thrown the last fragments away, had brushed my fingers clear of them, and looked up to say, "It's cool out here; come in," when he drew himself up and said,

"Cool to-night. The dew is falling on your thin dress. You go in; I'll go home."

"What did you come for? What brought you?" I asked, detaining him.

"Oh! nothing!" his tones, his smile, with as much sarcasm in it as can come into smile of Robin's, turning the answer into a recrimination.

"No, Robin, say what did you come for? Let there be no more equivocation between us two."

"Even so!" brightening, turning to me, coming up close before me. "Why didn't you tell me the beautiful things Mr. Mayfield said to you in the time of it?"

"Why—why it was noth—no, stay, Robin; I—I don't know why I didn't; I can't tell you why; probably because I was very foolish."

"Good night, cousin Anna."

"Good—a bad night to you, cousin Robin; I'm vexed with you."

"I am not with you. Good night."

I came in quickly, and shut the door without a word, my poor "ginger temper," as Mrs. Eaton calls it, overmastering the commiseration wakened by his tones. His looks I could not discern in the twilight.

Heu me miseram! here I am in the desert, and that little blast of my temper was a sirocco thereof.

The 4th—Morning.

When Robin and I were sitting at his mother's, last evening, after I had got through with my "perhapses" of the soul, of life, he said, "If there is a way to live, better than we, any of us, have found; a way to be content, noble, heroic, over the hoe and the scythe, over the great books of hard terms I go through so stupidly, with such mortal hindrances; a way to be done with all mumbling and fumbling, I, for one, would be glad to find it, and walk in it. What I want," he went on, speaking with increasing earnestness, "is to be really *great* in whatever I do. If I have got to dig and mow my way, (if I could say *carve* it, cousin Anna! if I were artist and not farmer!) I would be glad to get less dust into my coat sleeves," looking down on his arm, giving it one stroke with his hand, "would be less awkward, less tanned, and speckled, and 'blotched up,' now spreading his poor, hard hands before him and me."

I felt my heart ache for him. I told him to never mind the dust, or the blotched hands, but to keep his eyes on the glory before him. I said "glory," for this is the word, and there is no other that adequately represents the career I see possible to him—possible to me, if I do not get discouraged and lost by the way—possible to all whom God has beneficently endowed with large intellects, delicate sentiments and passions, and placed here in this New World, in this world, anywhere in it, in this time. Seeing it possible for myself—seeing the inspiration, the halo of it sometimes rise before me, as it were, to lead me, "a cloud by day, a pillar of fire by night," feeling sometimes the clearness and strength to follow; makes the discouragement utter, that I never do follow; that the cloud and the pillar, moving on, are soon out of my sight, and I am groveling still. What I desire for myself, is not to go hastily to any new arena, but to have patience, dignity, and delight here where I am; to keep my spirit so near the gate of heaven, so far above the dust, din, and oppression of my earthly lot, that they shall have no more power over me, to deaden my sight, or my hearing, or to drag me downward. That this kind of life is possible—that, in fact, this alone is life, and all the rest death, he showed me, while we walked that blessed June evening; he let me see it for the first time in a few fit, melodious words, in the thrills of that life he magnetically gave me. He let me see farther, that to the simple end of living this life, come the heaven-appointed throng of aspirations, longings, "aching words," as the Scriptures best name them, "the teachings of the Holy Spirit," to admonish us of our wants, our pain—to hint to us that, somewhere, if we could but find it, is something better, lovelier, happier for us. We do not understand them, so he said, and are, perhaps, only confused and troubled by them. We complain—we wonder what it is that "tugs at our hearts so, and pulls us about—wonder why we were born; we grope, and stumble, and, at last, poor creatures! are on what people call our death-beds; and then he said our "*Apage, Satanas*," heretofore cried with feeble soul and strong lips—cried now on our death-beds with feeble lips and strong soul—is obeyed; "the world, the flesh, and the devil," get behind us; heaven, Christ, and his beautiful angels, appear before us; but are no nearer us, so he said, than all our life-time they have been; only, blind, deaf, darkened in our understandings, we saw, heard, and felt them not. "May God help us!" he said, sighed, pressed my hand, smiled on me, and bade us "good night;" for,

walking with slowest steps, we had reached our gate.

Good night—I say it to him—good night, thou teacher, beloved, worshiped, whom I am never more to see.

CHAPTER II.

Thursday, the 5th.

"She's a Rosenvelt; her half brother was governor of New Jersey, a few years ago," my father said to me this morning, frowningly. He was at the dining-room mirror tying his cravat. "I want you to take pains to meet her—properly," turning toward me, and from beneath his overhanging brows, looking me over. "I want you to be well dressed—handsomely dressed. She's accustomed to this, and will be struck, if there's anything out of the way. There's some money," drawing out his pocket-book, pulling note after note out of the roll and handing them to me, apparently without knowing or caring how much he gave me. "Go to Concord if necessary; get whatever you need; call at Mrs. John Holmes' and ask her advice. I shall be gone a week probably; probably I shall be here in a week from to-day. We shall come by the last train. I've told Mrs. Eaton what to do; she'll do her part, she always does. You have never done yours yet; you—"

"Don't accuse me!" I cried out. "Wait and see what I do this time!"

"No, I *shan't* wait! not without telling you what I expect of you! She's a particular woman, particular about forms and what they call etiquette. She's *used* to being particular, and you must pay some attention to this fact. Your mother always fell a great way short of my wishes in this respect; you are like her, but this won't do now."

Faint, trembling with my anger and distress, I tore a finger-nail to the quick so that it bled, without feeling or knowing it. I looked at him as he stood there, taking pains with his cravat and collar, puncturing my life through and through with his iron will and sternness, and, for a few moments, hated him with a most intense hatred. Then I reflected that it was his father's cold blood in him that wronged me, and said, "Poor man! he, after all, perhaps has the saddest of it with his hard, unloving, unloved life." I say it now, many a time, with raining tears, and think I love him, and that, through all the future, I will so regulate my looks, speech, and ways, that he shall see the love, a light about me and upon all the place, as it were, and shall grow tender toward me on account of it. But I have no power over him.

Strong, energetic in his *psyche* as in his muscular *physique*, he makes all the atmosphere about him, wherever he is; and I, who elsewhere am one of the strongest, near him am one of the weakest; my strength is turned into turbulence; my quiet into stubbornness, and then I am so wicked! so wretched! After it is over, I cry out, "Oh! God, forgive me!" This is my daily, almost my hourly cry, "Oh! God, forgive me!" when, if I had one thing that I have not, the love of my father, and all the rest that I have were wanting, in the poorest home, under the severest toil, I should feel as if I had wings on my shoulders and my feet, and should, all day long, sing and give thanks out of my heart of joy.

I did not speak to my father again. After a little more adjustment of his attire and his locks, after turning to look his fine form over in the glass, he added, "I want everything to be done that can be done. I've told Mrs. Eaton to let you help her. And, when you undertake to help her, do things as *she* wants them done. You're apt to set up your own will there as you do everywhere else; but this you can't expect to do, for Mrs. Eaton is mistress over the kitchen, over you, when you are in the kitchen. She knows what she wants done, and how she wants it done. You don't. You must remember this."

He went then and started on his long journey, without another word, another look; left me thinking that Mrs. Eaton was mistress of her own actions and of mine, he master of his own actions and mine; that I was bound hand, and foot, and will. I grew faint thinking of it. Then, all at once, came over me a breath of balm thinking of *him*; of what he had said in his sermons of the free soul, how it is able to rise above all things, and conquer all things; so that, as the good, great Paul said out of his calm soul, we out of our calm souls can say, "None of these things move me."

No doubt there are many husbands exacting and stern like my father, with wives strong and clear-willed like myself. His wife, my poor mother, was like me; so all say, and so I believe from what I remember of her. No wonder, alas! that she died early, of "heart disease!"

CHAPTER III.

The 9th.

Mrs. HOLMES, who is a spirited, magnificently dressed woman, said to me when we were out to buy my things, "No, no, Miss Burnham! I will not let you get *that!* You have your hands hold-

of all the drabs and browns! I will not let you get those ugly colors." So I let her do as she pleased, there and at the milliner's and dress-maker's. I could never, out of my sombre, habitual life, have chosen such colors, such modes; but I saw a harmony in all her proceedings, in the colors and fabrics she brought together, that pleased me like a lovely work of art. I felt their suitableness to myself, as I longed to be, felt myself capable of being; I felt myself developing, as it were, at once, into suitableness to their elegance and harmony. She, seeing my acquiescence, my pleasure, called me "dear," "sweet;" and at last, when she saw me dressed, clasping her long, soft fingers in ecstasy before her, she said,

"Oh! you beautiful creature! Did you know you were so beautiful? Did it ever come into your head that you were like that? It never did into mine. I knew you had Grecian features, to be sure. I knew your eyes were soft, and large, and handsome. I knew you had perfect teeth, and a graceful form and movement; but I never thought of anything like this, never! I am as proud of you as I can be!"

Three days more, and they will be here; so, beginning to-morrow morning early, I must be what help I can to Mrs. Eaton.

"I'm glad you come as soon as you *did*," she said to me to-night; "for we've got a great deal to do, to-morrow, and next day, and next; every carpet in this great house to sweep, every bit of silver, and every knife and fork to rub over, (though most of 'em are as bright now, perhaps, as they will be after they've been rubbed over;) the back room floors and back stairs must be washed the morning before they come; it must be cleaned away all round the back doors; and then there's no end to the cooking we must do."

"Hem!" I interposed, sending it forth on a tempestuous sigh. I was growing feverish; I sent my hair back from my temples and ears, my sleeves back from my wrists.

She looked on these demonstrations over her glasses, knit her brows and said, "I've made up my mind just what I shall do. I shall make fruit cake," indicating that that was one, and that all the rest were to follow under numerical assortment, by taking the end of her left hand little finger between the thumb and fore-finger of her right hand, "fruit cake, sponge-cake—frosted and plain—cup-cake, cookies, (and I shall bake some of the sponge-cake in thin sheets to make Washington pies of,) and this is all the kinds of cake I shall make. For pies, I shall make blueberry," beginning again at her little finger, "green apple, then there'll be the

Washington pies and the tarts. I shall be glad when the squashes are a little bigger. We must get one of the best tongues that ever was, of Cawley, in the morning and boil it. I'm glad we've got such good dried beef—only, I don't think I smoked it quite enough, this year. Another time I shall let it be in smoke jest about one day longer; jest about."

By this time, she was rocking energetically back and forth, in her little, old-fashioned kitchen chair, kept covered always with fresh chintz or delaine, that it may be fit for dining and sitting-room. Her eyes were bright, her mouth was pleasant, she was in the hey-day of housekeeping glory.

"We must have a couple of chickens killed," she was going on, without abatement of her enthusiasm, to say. But, begging hotly, I said, "Don't, please, Mrs. Eaton, plan about that. Put off the planning, please, till morning. I want to rest now, I am tired. I must go up stairs and rest now!"

I am not strong like Mrs. Eaton. If my life were one of play instead of work, I should protest with an equal weariness, if, when one day of amusement were over, and no night of rest had supervened, no morning for arranging my new-born energies, my manager said, "This is what we will do to-morrow; I'll lay it all out, as it were, on a map before you; then you'll see;" if she went on to say, "Here we'll be in our chambers; we won't stir out here, for the dew will be on, and our pretty morning dresses, you know! Here we'll dress as prettily as we can, and go all together and ride through the villages, and up on the hills where there are charming prospects; and berries, too, and beautiful wild flowers; but we mustn't get out for these; our gloves, you know, and nice things! Some day, though, one day some time this season, we'll dress on purpose for it and go off, all of us, with our luncheons, and so on, and have one grand time with nature, at Kearsarge or Webster Lake. This will be nice; we shall like it better, all of us, no doubt, than all the rest of the year put together; we shall wish we were in Germany or England, where we could half live out-doors; but we shall know it don't do here where everybody is so particular, where ladies live in their houses; and grow pale and nervous, I know; but we can't help this; we must do as the rest do. So only one day will we give to nature out-of-doors; the rest of the time we'll give to society and such things, to keeping ourselves delicate, and so on, in-doors. This is the way we'll do, year out and year in."

Escaping to-night from Mrs. Eaton, I put my

head back, with my hand already on the balustrade, and said, "I beg your pardon, good, faithful Mrs. Eaton; I wish I had more patience; but I must go up stairs and mend my apron; you know how I tore it to-day on the garden gate."

Escaping from the manager of my play life, with my toes on the lower stair, I should say, "*Pardonner!* let me retreat! Nature is my mother, let me touch her often. The dews strung on the grasses and gossamer threads are my pearls; and let me look at them now and then, I beg! I wish I could have patience to be hindered, to be barricaded from them with forms and pretty observances; but I should die! Good night!"

Good night.

CHAPTER IV.

The 10th.

A LETTER came to-day from my father to my uncle Julius. Uncle came in with it and read, "'Tell Mrs. Eaton that a brother of my new wife, Mr. Horace Rosenvelt, of New Orleans, is here with us.' At Saratoga," uncle explained, looking up from the sheet; "'tell her that he will go home with us. She will perhaps need to do something to some of the chambers, in reference to this. Tell her to do everything that needs to be done. Tell Liscom he'll bring horse, carriage, and dog along. Tell him to get Judkins there, and have the corner stall fitted up new; for he—Rosenvelt, I mean—is particular about his horse and his dog. He don't mind half so much about himself, I see—although he's very rich, and has lived there at New Orleans, where he had plenty of servants and everything he wanted—as he does about his horse and dog. Let Liscom know that he is particular, and that I am particular about his being suited.'"

Uncle Julius, looking quietly in my face, as if to read my thoughts, folded and re-enveloped my father's letter; then, without comment of his own, or remark, he said, "Let's see what you've got this morning that I want," and began looking about him, on table and shelf. For his society is "but a handful;" this is what they often say of themselves, as if mourning; and so, with the best they can do, his salary is but a poor pittance, which the farmers back on the hills eke out, by bringing him butter-balls, quarters of cheese, and of mutton, jugs of milk, and so on; which the villagers eke out, bringing, or sending in pieces of calico, and the like—the number of yards and appearance giving intimation generally, what appropriations were

made of it in the minds of the giver—now and then a delicately baked pie for dinner, now and then a steak, and word that a pudding will be along by-and-by, if a clerical visitor comes unexpectedly to his gate, if the villagers see him come and spread the news; which he, good soul! ekes out, as he did to-day, carrying home from here, in his pockets, and arms, and hands, apples for pies, corn, in all the green glory of husk and silk, radishes, eggs, tomatoes, brown bread baked in a large loaf, in our large brick oven, slices of ham and cheese, and goes off richer than my father ever is, with his heritage of many flocks and fields. To-day I piled up his arms and stuffed out his pockets, until he was like Santa Claus, as grotesque and as merry.

"When you are married, niece Anna," he said, as he was going, "I'll tie the knot for nothing. I expect this Mr. Rosenvelt, that is coming, is a bachelor. She must look out for that, mustn't she, Mrs. Eaton? Keep your locks in order, niece Anna; pin your collar even, I see it lacks an inch or two of this now—and—"

"Not if he is a bachelor, uncle Jule," I exclaimed; "not if you say one word; not if you—"

"Tuck your old slippers out of sight, and put on—"

"Not, uncle Jule, if you, or any one, say one word about it, or think of such a thing. I will look horribly, if one word is said!"

"Niece Anna, you're as lawless as a hurricane. But now do be gracious to Mr. Rosenvelt. There is a right and wrong for you, a courteous and a discourteous; do try the right and the courteous; you owe it to yourself. And to uncle Jule, who thinks not a little of his niece Anna, when she does her best; do you understand?"

"Yes, good uncle Jule; good-by. Stop! let me send a couple of Johnny's cucumbers for aunt Mary to eat with her dinner. See how green and perfect they are; and she loves them."

"No, I don't allow her to eat them; they're miserable things; they hurt her."

"You don't allow *you*, uncle Jule, tender as you are? This is the reason I would never be married. The men won't allow, that's the trouble! I should hate a man, I know I should, I couldn't help it, if he, doing himself whatever he pleased, said to me, or about me, that he didn't want me to do so and so. I could never stand that, never!"

"Who is it," uncle said, resting his full arms on the high, wide shelf, "that has so laid His laws upon you, that you eat, speak, move, feel, and do, whatever you do at all, under them?"

"That is God, and no man," I said, awed

within me. "God is so good, I love and know Him so much, that His laws and commands lie on me like bands of roses, not—"

"Not as chains; hardly as laws even; but more as a gospel; this I understand. Be sure you get a good man, sure you love him, and his requirements, his devices will be more rose-bands for you. You'll like them. If he says to you—now come to the case in hand—if I say to your aunt Mary, 'Don't taste the miserable things,' I help her to do what she knows, as well as I, she ought to do. She knows I put out the helping word—call it command, if you will—because I care for her. She knows the nearer one comes to my heart, the more do I care what one does to wrong one's body and one's soul. She understands it, and loves me the better that I try to keep her right. You'll understand it some day, I hope, better than she does; for I hope you'll get a better husband than she has got. Hush! I know what you are going to say. But do you know, niece Anna, if you go to counting my conjugal observances, my moralities, I hate them. That is, I hate them and count them as filthy rags, if you hold them up before me as my righteousness. I have known what it was, months, years, thank God! of my life, when this light shone all about me, as, just now, it does not shine; when my soul, and all within me, praised Him with an outgush of gladness and thanksgiving, as, just now, my soul does not praise Him; when He was so near me, that my hand lay in His, and felt the thrill of the blessed communion; when I could feel no sorrow, no disquietude, no impatience, let what would come; for God was enough for me. When one knows what this is, then one knows the meaning of Scriptures like this, 'Though I give all my goods to feed the poor, have all knowledge, give my body to be burned, and have not charity,' (which means love, niece Anna—which means God Himself—means the brightness of His presence—means more than I can tell,) 'I am as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal.' This is what my morality, your morality, everybody's morality is, if he has not, shining on his soul, reflected outward from his soul upon all his deeds, the light of God's love. That Mr. Mayfield, of Philadelphia, who preached here last season—you heard him—knows these things, and keeps himself all the time, I should think, by what he says, where I, and most others who are trying to be Christians, are, only once in a great while. Good-by," lifting his load to go. "I'm going home. You'll hear a better sermon next Sunday, for this little talk I've had here with you. Good-by."

Later.

I said "Good-by," with my face averted. I am ashamed that my color changes, that my eyes kindle, as I know they do, whenever one names him. I am ashamed and grieved; for there is not the least reason. It shows that I am weak and foolish, with no command over myself. Well, no matter whether one blushes, or what changes of the face there be, if one's heart—*eh bien*, there's the trouble, the heart! the heart—what can one ever do here, in this world, with one's heart?

CHAPTER V.

Wednesday, 11th.

"See—to-day—" Mrs. Eaton began, this evening, putting on the look I especially dread, the arithmetical look, and, taking the bare, round elbow of her left arm into her right hand, "to-day we've made the jam and the shrub, scald the strawberry preserves, (and we came pretty nigh losing them, and no mistake,) we've made brine for the pickles; you've done that good job to this Mr. Rosenvelt's room—"

"Don't tell him, or any one, that I did it," I interposed; "I have reasons; I don't want anybody to know."

"Laud! I shan't tell." She rocked, she brightened; she added, "I expect we shall live like kings, after they all get here. I shall like it! I like cooking!" and the rest; all which was I compelled to hear, with my fingers longing for the pen that lay up stairs on my wiper, my heart longing for one sight, from my windows, of the soft, starry, blessed night. But I sat looking at her, to hear her. I said to my heart, when it bemoaned, "Be still, selfish heart; this is your duty." But I wonder if it was! I suppose it was. I suppose the eye and the ear are not always to lead us as they list; but the will, heaven-directed, is to put their mastery aside and rule them and all their being. If our obedience takes the character of penance, as mine did to-night, I suppose it is because we "are yet in our sins." If our love and our wisdom were equal to what the will, the conscience require, I suppose there could never be suffering in the obedience. I do not know, however. I am as a babe, toddling about with uncertain feet. Would that he were somewhere near, that he might now and then help me.

To-morrow will the new mother come. I wonder, if, looking to see her enter, I shall see that love and peace are with her, one on her right, the other on her left. I fancy her New Orleans brother, who brings horse and dog carefully along, has the look of a brigand. If his

moustache does not, on either side, come to a bristling point, if his eye does not gleam through the forest of his brows, if his hair is not stiff and high, his skin dark, I shall be taken aback. I must begin anew with him.

CHAPTER VI.

June 12th—Evening.

LET me look back and see her led in by my father, the stateliest woman my eyes ever beheld. Her eyes are dark; above them is a widely arching and fair forehead. Her cheeks are thin, but deeply red, and shaded delicately with short, light, natural curls. She wears no jewels in sight, save a large, soft-looking cameo, rimmed with pearls, at her throat, fastening her frilled linen traveling collar. A narrow black guard, disappearing at her belt, gives intimations of the eye-glass concealed there. Her gown is a soft, gray traveling silk, trimmed simply, but with nicely matching colors; her shawl, covered with little palm-leaf figures of a delicate fabric, and hanging with careless grace about her, envelopes her even to the hem of her long, wide-spread skirts. She fixes her eyes on me at once, when she enters. And when my father, who does not speak to me, either then or afterward, in the way of greeting, says, "My daughter—Anna—Mrs. Burnham." She says, "How do you do, dear?" takes the tips of my fingers into the tips of hers, lets one arm glide a little way round my waist and kisses my cheek. I am a good deal choked up to see how utterly unlike my own poor mother she is, and that my father does not speak to me, after he has introduced us, look at me. He turns to Mrs. Eaton, smiles, says, "How d'do, Eaton?" shaking hands with her over the traveling bag, shawl, and packages he is receiving out of Mr. Liscom's hands. He asks Mrs. Eaton, familiarly, how she has prospered; smiles and says he is "glad to hear it," when she tells him she "has prospered right well." He stirs about with briskness, sends Mrs. Eaton up with her—with my mother; tells Mr. Liscom what to do with this trunk and that trunk; tells Johnny to start the horses along a little and give Mr. Rosenvelt a chance to come up. At that moment appears a big, black Newfoundland dog; and, when our medium-sized pointer, Rover, sees him, he bristles, and goes to meet him with steps and air cautious and haughty. Newfoundland stops and eyes him cavalierly; my father laughs, watching them; tells Rover that he "must be polite to his new acquaintance;" and then, on this side of the low-drooping branches of the elms, appears a horse black as coal, a carriage

with slight, sun-bright red wheels glancing, and a gent whom I do not stop to see, but whom I hear, as he springs to the ground, while the carriage is yet moving, say, "Leon, behave yourself! Shame, dog!" Next I hear pats on his horse's neck; hear him in a voice that sounds agreeably on the ear, say, to my father, "The cars play the deuce with his nerves. He'll show it in his nostrils—see how they quiver and work!—see how wide they are!—he'll show it thereto and in his eyes, even in his limbs he'll show it, I shall see it there, for a week." Then come more pats; he calls his horse in affectionate tones, "Good old chap!" tells him to "go off to the stable with—"

"With Mr. Liscom," my father explains, and adds, "Mr. Rosenvelv, my wife's brother, Liscom. Take his horse along. Come in, Rosenvelv."

Then their steps sound on the brick walk and on the door stones, and I flee.

Morning—the 13th.

But I had better have stayed; it would have been less terrible than sitting here in my chamber, listening to the doors opening and shutting in all parts of the house; to the firm, emphatic feet—hers, his, and my father's—along the hall, on the stairs, along the landing, within the chambers, and every moment dreading to hear Mrs. Eaton's voice at the foot of the stairs calling me.

It came at length, "Anna, where are you?"

"In my chamber," I answered, hurrying to the head of the stairs—the end stairs.

"I want you to come down and help me get supper on the table," she said, speaking with slight impatience, when she saw me. "I can't do it all alone, to save my life; and you must know I can't!"

I told her I would be down in a moment, and then came back into my chamber, to breathe one minute the clear out-door air at my window; to ask myself if that was a specimen of the power I was to attain over outward circumstances; to call myself "a poor, weak thing! if the fear of what two mortal men, and one mortal woman would think of me, could make me so sick and so afraid!" The self-castigation did me good. In a few moments I was able to say, "Poh!" to myself, with some spirit; and then I ran down, lest I should again hear Mrs. Eaton's voice commanding me to come. She shows me little respect when my father is about; her least requests are apt, when he is near, to take the unfriendly energy of commands.

"You've got here," said she, without looking at me.

"Yes," I answered, cheerfully, "and now tell me what I shall do."

"You ought to have been here before," said my father, coming in from the back door, where, as I suppose, he had been standing, counting the minutes to my coming. "Half past five o'clock, when we are to have tea at six, is no time to come and begin to ask what you shall do." Pocketing his watch, he went by me in his new, easy slippers, on his way to the parlors, and soon I heard him and the others laughing, heard rush and frolic between Rosenvelv and both dogs, his and ours, first in the hall, then in the yard, and on the carriage-sweep beyond. Sick at my heart, dreading the meeting at supper, dreading all the future, wishing that I could go to my chamber and stay there, living on crust and water till I died, I brought the rich dishes and placed them on the table; placed them here, and Mrs. Eaton said, "No, no, the strawberry preserves must go here; this is the place for the blueberries; bring the blueberries and put them here;" said another time, "No, the plate of tarts here, the sponge-cake there. Now, bring the butter and put it here; the tongue, and put it there; I'll see to the tea, and then we'll call them."

How hot I was! in what trepidation! I should surely do some ridiculous thing at table, to make my father angry, to make—"What is that, Johnny?" It looked like one of Robin's notes, and so it was. I took it to the palm of my left hand, and it comforted every nerve. I had time to read a part of it before they came out. "Cousin Anna," it said; "we've sold Lucifer. I forgot his vices, as you will believe, when they were driving him away, and tried to give one friendly stroke to his neck, but he brought his fiery head round, shook his horns at me, shook them the second time, and then went by me on his way. He's a crossing of several breeds, you see, cousin Anna; and he has never seen a docile day, since we brought him away from his Herefordshire mother. Looking after him to see him trudge away, poor fellow! I told the men to be kind to him; but did I not know that Bill Bradley would not? Ay, and there's no excuse, only this, alack! we made money in selling him, and to-morrow I'm going to Concord to get the books I want! A *crie de joie* for me, cousin Anna! the waters are already in hearing of the thirsty deer."

This opportune glimpse of an earnest, manly life, filled with struggle, carried me beyond my weakness and fear. What were they, I asked myself, when I heard them coming along the hall, what was any one that I should feel my

whole soul, breathed into me of God, the soul that is His and mine, not theirs, that is capable of such greatness, bend itself before them and tremble? Let me be myself, I said, all that He meant me to be when He made me, and——”

Later.

“My daughter,” was all my father said in introducing me to Mr. Rosenvelt.

Mr. Rosenvelt, if I’m not mistaken, gave the first half of the meal to a scrutiny of my features; but, with dear Robin’s beautiful life inspiring mine, with his note lying beside my plate, and my hand lying on it, now and then, I did not feel it, as I certainly should have done, if no such help had been near. I was able to answer what remarks he and my mother addressed to me, with ease and a degree of dignity, as I believe; a poor achievement to boast of, truly; but, alas! it is rarely that I attain it, nor as it is, even with common acquaintances, when my father is at table.

June 24th.

Mr. Rosenvelt is not what I pictured him beforehand. His eyes, instead of piercing you, out of ambush, often turn themselves deliberately, sympathizingly toward you, and read you through and through, kindling sometimes as they read. They are not dark; I think they are a light gray. His skin is clear, but red; he is like an Englishman, in his complexion, in his compact but flexible form; and, moreover, as I think, in his genial humor. He laughs and “makes fun,” as he calls it, all day long, when he is not “napping.” He dozes away half the time between dinner and tea; on his bed, when it is not too hot up there; when it is, he “camps down”—this is his phrase—on one of the sofas, or on the settee in the hall; waking sometimes to set himself and us laughing at his loud yawning, heard in all the rooms about, then going into a doze again. He does not ride so much as he plays with his horse, making him curvet, leap a bar, and prance in many beautiful fashions. He rails at us Yankees, because we work so hard. Others may call us universal Yankees, he says, and he presumes we are; but he shall call us everlasting workers; we are this more than we are anything else. We do not know what it is to repose, sitting, as the Southerners and English people do, and the Germans, and everybody but we Yankees. Every other chair in our parlors is a rocker, and when we can find nothing else to do, we rock with our might and roll the corner of our handkerchiefs. Pooh!—laughing the expletive—who but a Yankee would call that repose? He quizzes “Molly,” my mother, hides her glasses, her handkerchief,

which she carelessly drops here and there, and has so innocent a face—albeit his eyes are shining like stars—with his elbows on the arms of his chair, and his fingers together at play with each other, or with any chance thing that gets into them, that, as often as he has played the same, or similar games upon her, she seldom fixes her suspicions so unmeaningly as to preclude search, until he laughs out explosively as a merry child laughs, and produces the article, or tells her where she may find it. Then she is half vexed, which suits him. He laughs, looking at the frown on her brows trying to hide the smile on her lips; laughs again and with greater enjoyment when she calls him “a brother,” and threatens him.

Later.

“Guess what our sister-mother here has planned for you and me, Miss Anna,” said he, an hour ago, breaking off in the midst of one of these laughs, and wheeling himself round so as to face me.

Worried by the expression, half comic, half earnest, with which he looked down on his fingers, listening what my answer would be, I could only keep my eyes on my sewing and say, “I don’t know, I am sure. I am stupid at guessing.”

“Let me tell you. She says I am old enough, thrifless enough, and helpless enough, in general, to need—but I shan’t tell!—why should I? Leon, hi!” springing into his chair, and raising his hand the whole length of the sinewy arm. “Up here! up to my finger and thumb, and you shall have a piece of hot custard pie—hot as fire, Leon, for your supper.”

My mother looked now from the dog to him. “No, indeed, he shan’t, Horace, for supper!”

“Not a word, Molly. Hi, Leon! There, that’s a brave dog; the best old chap!” Coming down from his chair and again seating himself, he patted the dog’s head, praising him, appealing to my mother and me to “Say! was there another dog quite so manly, quite so handsome?” The dog, meanwhile, looking up with intelligence into his master’s face, made answers of gratitude in his mute way; and I, looking on, thought it was a fine sight. Then I thought how there are thousands and thousands of human faces here on this earth where we three are living, acting, and hardly a ray of intelligence, love, gratitude is ever emitted from one of them, if we look ever so long, ever so searchingly. Unless, thought I—and the new thought moved a little the pain of the old—unless we stoop to them, lay our hand on them, look with our pitying eyes into their forlorn eyes, and so call up

from the soul that is certainly somewhere in the miserablest of these creatures, a ray of the divine. Oh! thought I, and here he stays patting his dog; here she stays, putting the beautiful edge upon her netticoat; here I stay and—die! die daily, hourly, because I do not live. God forgive me! God help me! God forgive and help us all! So I was thinking, choked with tears, my eyes blind with tears, when I heard Rosenvelt, speaking to my mother, say, "Mrs. Eaton has promised me a deep custard pie, hot out of the oven, for supper. I wanted one and told her so. I never ate such custards as she makes. I shall never forget them."

He looked and spoke with a dreamy earnestness, by which I knew that Mrs. Eaton's custards are to be one of his regrets after this. Searching my face bent low over my sewing, he may have read a part of my thought; for he said with a long breath, as he was leaving his chair, "Miss Anna is thinking that she hopes there is, somewhere out in the world, some man who is more of a man than I. She thinks a man had better be talking of—of glory, for instance, and leave custards to be praised by the children."

I did not answer. I smiled a little with dry lips, and then answered. "Come, Leon," said he, moving, "come with your master." When he was passing the window on the outside, he came up to say, "Try to miss us a little, Miss Anna—since now-a-days there's nobody to miss us, out of her heart, without trying."

He was gone. When our eyes met, my mother's and mine, she said, as if explaining, "He was thinking of a particular person. He don't forget her, of course. One never forgets. But he don't love her an atom; he has told me so. And, of course, he don't, for what hap-

pened was his own choice; his and hers too. They both chose it; still, of course, they neither of them quite forget, since we all have our remembrances. I presume you have, Anna. Yes, I see by the blush that you have, as, of course, you would have. How old are you?"

"Twenty."

"Yes, and he's thirty-two. Looks young, don't he? He looks no older for a man, than you do for a woman; not a day. But, what I was thinking of, was that, of course, as he had lived twelve years longer than you, he too would have his remembrances. But he don't love any one; didn't, that is, when he came here; and I don't know as he does now. He hasn't said a word. But he wouldn't; it isn't like him. He'll go off now a long tramp; a long walk; it is his way when anything stirs him, as something in your looks seemed to; and he will forget it while he's gone. He'll be back, puffing, out of breath and hungry as a child, just as we are ready to sit down to the table. That's his way. He's had it now ever since—he's had it; that is, several years; or, a year or two, at any rate, he's had this habit of taking long walks; sometimes just before bed time, when he thinks he shan't sleep if he don't tire himself out beforehand."

"Yes," I had been answering—"yes—yes."

Now she applied herself to her embroidery; I said, "I will go up stairs awhile;" and, with my heart brightening more and more at every step that brought me nearer my pen, I came.

Now I will go and help Mrs. Eaton. To go of my own accord and help her, gives me no annoyance, sometimes gives me pleasure, I find; to sit here until she calls me, does not give me pleasure, for she calls peremptorily.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE BURNHAMS OF BOSCAWEN PLAIN: CHAPTER VII.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L--'S DIARY."

Peterson's Magazine (1849-1892); Feb 1860; VOL. XXXVII., No. 2.; American Periodicals
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THE BURNHAMS OF BOSCAWEN PLAIN.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SUSY L--'S DIARY."

[Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1860, by Charles J. Peterson, in the Clerk's Office of the District Court of the United States, in and for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania.]

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 36.

CHAPTER VII.

Morning—June 25th.

HE made a noise as if he were a great wind when he came, depositing his cane, setting the door wide open against some chairs, purposely tumbling over the footstools and cushions, which, as he says, my mother always has in the way. He brought this message from my father, who was in the field, to my mother; she was not to keep tea waiting for him; a heavy, black cloud was in the west; a shower was coming, and he must stay to help the hay-makers. Alas, for me, I was glad! tension went from hands, arms, feet, brain, as if, gently and at once, all the cords with which my being is habitually tightened, and strained, and kept from natural, satisfied action, were loosed and I was free. My heart bounded with gladness; but the next moment it sank, that it had such cause for such joy.

Rosenvelt, in the midst of the meal, asked, "Did you miss me?"

He was looking into his teacup, and I did not answer; not until, turning his head toward me, he waited for me to speak. Then I said that I did not; certainly I did not. I went up stairs, busied myself and did not miss him.

"That was rascally! Leon, wasn't it rascally?" After sitting a few moments in silence, one hand on Leon's head, and the other balancing a spoon on the edge of his cup, he "often wondered," he said, "whether anybody would miss him if he were to disappear altogether, he and Leon. What was Leon's opinion? What did Leon think about it?"

Leon looked up with grave eyes; that was all the answer he got from Leon. It made the master's eyes grave.

"What do you say, Molly?" he asked, intently listening. I fancied he could hear the hard beating of his own heart, he listened so intently.

"I? Why I say that I should miss you; of course I should; you know I would, without asking."

"Less than you would your crinoline though, I imagine, if you couldn't replace it."

"What a boy!" said she; but he waived the subject.

I cut the pie and gave him a large piece. When he saw it coming, saw what a large piece it was, he glanced with quick inquiry into my face; and, seeing that it was a grave, sincere face, the color rose to his cheeks, overspreading his forehead. He looked pleased and grateful, like a good little child; said, "Thank you," like a good little child.

"Poor man! poor man!" I said, inwardly, pitying him.

Poor man! I say now, pitying him. If a man dies for truth, for the good of others, or wears himself out working for his family, or even for his own enlargement, I do not pity him. I say, "Work on, thou precious, thou beloved. Give if thou canst, for the world has need of such; die if thou must, and in thy death and after it thou shalt be a help to the world."

But Rosenvelt is an idler. We are all idlers. We have and do not give. We cook rich, ingenious dishes, and eat and drink them, and are the worse for them, the grosser, the more fiery, or the more stolid. We dress—that is, my mother dresses elegantly; I half dress, for I hate the pains I take with myself. We embroider everything; hunt everywhere, but in our own souls and up in the heavens, for what we shall say to each other, and come back with flattest common-place, armfuls of it. Then when another day is gone and it is ten o'clock at night, we lay ourselves down to sleep; we wake in the morning to a new day that shall be like the old. Only yesterday we had corn cakes for breakfast, boiled fish and pudding for dinner; to-day we have buckwheat cakes for breakfast, and a roast and pies for dinner; a sufficient difference, Mrs. Eaton thinks. My mother varies her toilet and expects Mrs. Bell will call to-day; yesterday it was Mrs. Walker and Mrs. Bean; difference enough for my mother.

Well, after this, perhaps Rosenvelt will like me a little for the custard I gave him; perhaps I shall like him a little for the gratefulness he showed; and this will give my to-morrow one

slight, to be sure, but blessed, rare advantage over my to-day.

June 28th.

This scrap is written in a delicate, pains-taking hand, upon a fly-leaf of Rosenvelt's "Gil Blas."

"The day is quenched, the sun is fled;
God has forgotten the world!
The moon is gone, the stars are dead,
God has forgotten the world."

He gently took the book out of my hand when he found I had finished it, and shut it. This was his answer to my raised look of inquiry.

"You think you've heard singing music, out of the human throat," said he, after having sat a few moments in silence, holding his book; "but you never have. At least, I don't suppose you ever have; perhaps though you've heard, in your own voice, for I have intimations of what is done sometimes when the—when the soul itself pours itself out. But I've heard such sounds—and it makes me strong enough to move this house!" his color rising, his eye flashing with a green and red light, "when I think of one voice, the face of light turned up to the sky—such a face as you never saw, certainly, nor are likely to, thank God; for you will never see a situation like that. What stirs me so, is that such women, with such faces, such voices, can, through their love and helplessness, become, as it were, the very slaves of such men even as I am, and I am no brute, as you know, Miss Anna. In many respects, I am a human being, with kindness in me, and some conscientiousness and truth." He walked the floor a minute perhaps, and then was seated. "But we hold them," he added, "when it is a daily torture to us, just as you've seen men here in this 'moral' place—for, I suppose, this is what your nice-looking ladies call the place—just as you've seen them, while innocent as babes in everything else, hold the cup, for instance, that damns them and many innocent ones beside; innocent wives, innocent little children. Most of us, in this world, hold something that damns us more or less, else why are we all more or less damned? dragged away from the original likeness? This is what I know, for I've seen it. It's one sin here, and another sin there; the world is full of sin. Christ is the pattern, your uncle Julius keeps saying; and he is some like him, but nobody else is: so it isn't for one man to go round, or to stand where he is, spying out the cobwebs that hang in his neighbor's house, but he is to turn the cobweb weavers, every one of them, out of his own house, sweep all the rooms clean, and sit down in them like a god."

I looked steadily and with sympathy at the flushed face, the fire-lit eye, but did not speak.

"Then," added he, after a pause, "he isn't to come out to his outer door and to the streets, and say peremptorily and like a Pharisee, 'See what I have done! I! I've done so and so, so and so, and you haven't. Go and do as I have done, or you'll be'—vilified, in short. When he comes back he finds the spiders weren't all dead, nor are likely to be. He brings in the dust and mud of the street corners, and besoils his rooms from doormat to couch; and, with the fever in him, the dust and egotism on him, he never more sits in his own house like a god. He is spoilt, excellent as his beginning was."

"What should he have done? How should he have done it?" I asked.

"It is hardly for me to say; and yet I know; I can see. He should have sat there, and others, seeing the beauty of such a life, the serenity, would understand the silent logic of his example, and do the same; first, one by one, then tens by tens, then hundreds by hundreds."

I thought of One who went from place to place, telling men whence he came, what works he had done and could do, and trying to persuade men; went, his "feet covered with the dust of travel." When I mentioned Him to Rosenvelt, he started and said quickly, "He never brawled. He never said 'I—'I,' or 'you'—'you,' with imperiousness and passion and human hatred. He was 'meek and lowly in heart,' do you remember? and was perfect, divine. He had a right and authority to speak. If he denounced the pharisaism, for instance, of a man, or a set of men, he was not denouncing that which was, perhaps, better than his own life; not those who differed from him, only in having different vices. Don't you see the difference?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Later.

I CONFESSED that I did see a vast difference. But was it not possible, I asked, for a man to come out among men, plead with them, paint the wrong they were doing, get dust upon his feet, but keep his soul gentle, loving, full of patience, and all manner of sweetness? Did he not believe such a life possible and most beautiful?

"Oh! he didn't know. Did I? did I believe it possible?"

"Yes, I did."

"Had I ever looked on such a life?"

"Yes, I believed I had."

"When? where? whose?—ah, you blush, Miss Anna!"

"I am ashamed that I do, for there's not the least reason. I was thinking of a Mr. Mayfield, of Philadelphia, who stopped here last season on his way to the mountains, and preached for uncle Julius one Sabbath. I never saw him before, I shall never see him again; hear that!" Night had been stealing on as we sat there on the door-steps; a whip-poor-will was beginning to sing over in the orchard, just as a pain was beginning to settle on my heart and gnaw there.

"Yes," said Rosenvelt, after listening and reflecting a few moments. "But it's the damallest of all sounds. I'd give a good deal never to hear it again. So you don't suppose you'll ever see this—this—what's his name?"

"Mayfield." I felt that I bowed my head in speaking his name; felt that I had nothing to do with the name, but silently to adore it, since he is so high, since I am so low.

"Mayfield," he repeated. "So you don't suppose you'll ever see him again?"

"No."

"Do you want to?"

"No. That is, I don't want him to see me again ever." I was thinking that I would love to sit in some back seat afar off and see and hear him.

"Why?" He was not looking at me; he was looking down on his fingers; but he listened.

"Because he is so great and I am so little. I am as nothing before him."

"Ho! this sounds dangerous," he replied, his voice stirred with emotion of some sort. "You, who would brush past pope and potentate with very little respect for them, as I fancy."

"With very little respect for their robes and crowns, I hope: with respect for nothing but their true nobleness."

"I wonder what a woman like you can think of a man like me?" he asked, speaking thoughtfully.

"What does a man like you think of himself?" I answered.

"He! he's in thorough disgust toward himself," and then he stopt abruptly.

Directly he spoke again. He was saying with a troubled voice, that he wished he could find one person, man, woman, or child, who was happy. He longed to look round him and see none but happy people. He came up here to the North, longing for it. "But there are no happy people here," he added. "You're all straining your souls and bodies apart, straining your eyes out, straining the flesh all off your

bones, with work. Everybody wants something. Want, want; work, work; strain, pull, drive, sweat, worry, fret—this is what you all do here at the North; I don't believe there's a truly happy man or woman in all this region. You don't believe there is, I see, you poor child! You droop, sitting here, as if you were a Magdalene, instead of the child of a perfect worldly prosperity. You feel too much strained and shut up, here, with so much work, so little play, with so many masters and mistresses!"

I said, "Yes."

"I wish I could do everything for you I'd like to," said he, speaking thoughtfully, and with tenderness. "I wish I could make you happy. I believe this would content me. It seems to me that if I could see you at rest in a beautiful home, if I could see you sitting and moving about there, queen of the place, your own queen—my own queen—pardon me for saying this, but it seems to me that, if I could see you so, and know that you were happy, that the happiness was of my own providing, I could feel that my old sins were wiped away. perhaps, that now, after so many weary years, was the time for me to be thoroughly content."

He moved nearer, for he was speaking low. He took my hand into his, palm to palm, nerve to nerve. Sitting so, I felt all within me surrender itself to him. I saw the beautiful, peaceful home, as he saw it; saw myself there, a new creature, a queen, even as he had said; free. Beside me he stood—Rosenvelt—and he was king, even as I was queen. What a lovely picture was that! When I withdrew my mind from it a little, so as to know that it was a picture and must vanish, my soul longed inexpressibly to retain it. I looked upon my actual, every day life with shuddering and shrinking. I did not know what I was about to do; but now I know that I shrank close to Rosenvelt, and felt it a comfort that his arm encircled me, that he plead with me and said with his manly tones, "Be mine, Anna. Let us see together, whether there is not really such a thing as happiness in this world. I believe you can love me after awhile, faulty as I am, when you see how I try to make you happy. I am sure I can love you. Perhaps I love you already; I believe I do. Can you say yes? Try to, I beg!"

The 30th.

Now that the time had come to reflect, to answer him, I waked. I felt myself tossed hither and thither with sudden conflict. I saw a pale, heavenly face look serenely, but, as it seemed to me, in sorrow and mild reproach, at me. It

was Mayfield's. But I turned hastily away from it; the face had nothing to do with me, never would have; I had nothing to do with the face, but to remember it as I remember how Christ once walked this low, sinful earth, blessing every inch of it that his feet trod, every landscape on which his eye rested, every star whose ray fell upon him. Sick at heart, with a long-drawn sigh, I let the face go; and then I looked on my home here, which, out of this little retreat, my own room, is no home to me, nor ever can be; saw my father looming beside me, high, wide, and stiff; saw his taunting looks, heard his taunting voice; knew that he would be more at ease here in this house, if I could nowhere, in any of the apartments or passages, appear before him; disliking Mrs. Eaton, feeling no affection as yet for my mother, believing that he who still held me—albeit, as I now perceived, with loosened arm—would protect me with kindness; I thought I could say yes. So, when he repeated the inquiry, I said, "Yes," adding, as something counseled me, "if you desire it, after thinking more of it; if, after we have thought more of it, we both think it best."

His arm lay loosely about me, yet another moment, in which he appeared in deep thought. Then sighing faintly—I just heard it—he pressed me closer, close, to his side, kissed my forehead and said, "Thanks; thanks, best Anna; my Anna; we will both of us be happy after this. We will have a beautiful home; you will be perfectly beautiful, taken care of as I will take care of you. Do you know how beautiful you are, I wonder?" touching his lips to my cheek.

"Oh! no," sighed I, dissatisfied, wondering dreamily what words he—Mayfield—would speak to me, if he and I were just betrothed, vowed to each other, for the rest of our days on earth.

"You are capable of wonderful beauty; but you haven't had much chance yet. Sighs? we must be done with sighing, now, you and I."

Then I smiled, although with faintness, as I am sure. I said, "I must go;" rose, said, "Good night." Then he asked me for "a good night kiss—just one—one!" I gave him my hand only, let my face droop out of his way, said, "Good night," again and came. I fear he did not like my refusal; but this must take its chance; I refused him and am not sorry.

But midnight has come and gone as I sat here. I must sleep if I can; and, if I sleep and dream, not one dream can seem less real than the reality (I am in a fright; I wonder whether it was a reality) enacted this night between him and me—and he in the world.

I AM beautiful, Rosenvelt said, that night, "capable of wonderful beauty;" said it as if congratulating himself. He will not let a hair of his beautiful horse lie amiss; the restive creature undergoes torment, daily, in the sponging, drying, combing, to which he is daily subjected; and therefore he has fiery eyes, vexed nostrils.

Now, in the morning, I look out habitually on the bright landscape, hear the birds, see them, and am often inexpressibly lifted, comforted; and, meanwhile, I dress myself without care, or endeavor; brush my hair back into the habitual morning plainness, put on the habitual nine-penny morning-gown of light colors, the habitual slippers, with dust, perhaps, in the embroidery, and incipient holes on the side. But the next morning I took pains and was spoilt by it; spoilt in comfort, spoilt, as I think, in care and comeliness of personal appearance.

Later.

I was half way down stairs, in my clean, light starched gingham, a clean stiff collar that fretted my neck, new slippers that fretted my feet, and my hair done up tightly, when I heard voices, heard Rosenvelt say, "Time enough for that, Mary! She will understand what becomes her as my wife and do it by-and-by; don't hurry and worry her."

"But I don't think she cares," argued my mother. "I think she will, perhaps, as you say; but she ought to begin now; and—"

Ought to begin now to make myself the slave of a new sentiment, his admiration of beauty, the slave of a new mistress, fashion, conventional propriety; this was the meaning my soul caught; and, turning, with trembling haste I came back, loosened my hair, took off the unaccustomed coverings that did but make a mummy of me; and when I had slipped on the old, soft-flowing gown, the old comfortable slippers, and the black lace-and-jet collar I had worn every morning for a month, there I was, myself. As myself, must he take me, or not take me at all; for myself would I be, all the days of my life. I would improve my soul, I hoped, in goodness, in spiritual grace and beauty; these, shining out, might give new grace and elegance to my face, my movements, even to my dress, if they would, legitimately. But, for my body would I not—so help me God!—care, directly, assiduously what I ate, what I drank, wherewithal I was clothed.

I went down stairs, and there I was, with my hair even less tidy than usual, complacently saying, "Good morning," to them. They looked

at me. I looked at the morning, and said, "Isn't it beautiful?" I felt a marvelous lightness and freedom. I thought of the Sisters of Mercy, putting on their dun robes, their deep, close bonnets, and saw how humility and godliness, chastened and deep, came at the same time that they cast off all thought for the body, and took possession of their souls. I was lifted up; then I bowed my head, and said, inwardly, "Thank God. If he takes me, he takes me as I am."

He came to stand by me, in the window opening upon the piazza. "You are well this morning," said he. "One needn't ask."

"I have a compliment for you, Anna," said my mother, coming up. "He," smiling on her brother, "he says you'll be the most splendid woman in New England, by-and-by."

"Oh!" begged I, with sudden pain, "don't say these things to me. I despise beauty, if it lies merely upon the face; and I know well enough what I lack elsewhere."

As to that, my mother said, we were none of us perfect; we mustn't expect to be perfect here. Would I let her pin my collar? it wasn't exactly even, not exactly; there. No one could expect to make oneself perfect here; but, pardon, she had heard *excellent* men say that beauty was a gift, a great gift, and that one ought to be thankful for it, and improve it, as one would any other great gift. Did I know? my hair would be prettiest, there was so much of it, it was so inclined to wave, naturally, if I dressed it something as Mrs. Bell did hers. Didn't I think that a beautiful fashion? As to beauty, why, of course, beauty of the face wasn't worth much, if there was nothing else.

My father, coming in that moment, said, "Anna, Mrs. Eaton needs help," and stood back out of the path for me to go out by him.

"Mr. Burnham," I heard my mother say, "come here a minute."

My father was very airy at breakfast. His child was to be taken away out of his sight; he had received the welcome intelligence, and it made him wonderfully airy.

CHAPTER X.

July 9th.

He asks me if I will ride with him that morning; if I will walk with him that evening; and, walking or riding, he looks out for some beautiful spot where "we will build our house."

I say, "Yes, where we will build it, if, after we have known each other long enough, we still think it best, both of us."

"Yes," he says, smilingly, as if there can be no doubt; and then, pointing with his whip or cane, he goes on laying his perfect plans. My mother tells me he will dress me as I have never seen one dressed yet. He will keep as many as three servants, a man for the garden and stable, and two women; for he'll keep open doors. We shall go winters to Boston, New York, and to other large towns, she says; of course we shall; people with the money that we shall have, the tastes that we shall have, always do. Summers we shall go to the mountains and watering-places; of course. In that way, and with Concord so near, of course we'll soon have a great many friends visiting us in the spring, and autumn, and friends, too, out of such families; that we will be obliged to have things beautiful. She hoped I would not have children to take care of, for years, she said, to-day; it was such a confined life! She didn't know what to make of it, she said, when, answering her, I told her I would rather have a little baby in my arms and know it was mine, the darling! and stay right at home with it and its father, and wear calico gowns, than to be a queen in society, with adorers all about me. There could be nothing on earth, I said, so good as having a little baby! especially if one loved and honored its father dearly.

"Oh! if I wasn't curious!" she said, and laughed.

CHAPTER XI.

July 12th.

ROBIN looks at me with dull eyes, when I come; is no longer inclined to sit down close at my side, to show me what pages, or what page, he has mastered that day, to tell me what acres he has mown or raked. When I look over to where he sits or stands, and ask him, he comes, looks pleased, but says, "You don't care about this dull plodding now-a-days."

"Yes, I do, cousin Robin," I say, grieved. Then he looks still better pleased, sits down by me, and, a little while, we talk as we used to, only a little while, however. There is always, at home, some ride, some walk planned, some visitor to receive, some visit to pay, or my mother will be expecting me, (she hunts all over the house for me, we must "plan" this or that, she says,) or Roosevelt will be expecting me; so, after sitting in the old comfort awhile, I sigh—then smile the instant Robin looks up—draw my shawl up, and say, "Well, I must go." Then Robin shuts his book, and sets his elbow on it; aunt Rosalia, looking up from her patient sewing, says, "Well, come again, dear, when you

can. Come as often as you can, stay as long as you can." Alice, laughing lightly, and perhaps skipping in her young grace, says, "Isn't it curious that he and I—your Rosenvelt and I, I mean—haven't met yet? I like it! I mean to see, now, how long it will be before we meet, so as to speak to each other. I've been gone both times he has called here, you know; he has been gone every time I've called there. "To-day," she said, when I was in, this evening, "I should have met him in the street, but I crossed over and pulled my hat down." Her eyes sparkled, she clasped her little pink fingers low before her, (and her round, straightened arms were as pure as marble,) laughed, took her dancing steps, keeping a graceful poise, when she stopped to say, "I peeped under my hat, I did, Miss Anna; and I'm done with all the heroes of all the novels I've ever read; I'm going to worship *him* after this." Again she danced. Again she stopt to add, "And I'm going to keep out of his sight. He'll know there is an Alice Bishop: but, if he don't begin to think she's something of a myth, by-and-by, I'm mistaken."

Robin told her more likely he wouldn't think of her at all; why should he?

Aunt Rosalia, looking at her with the pride in her beauty and grace she could not help feeling, shook her head, sighed, and called her "a wild girl."

Sad was my heart—for some reason, I know not what—coming home. I schooled it, censured it, asked it if it would ever grow so reasonable as to be content. It only grew the sadder making me answers.

CHAPTER XII.

July 14th.

"You are Minerva," said Rosenvelt, this afternoon, sitting at my side, playing with my fingers, his face toward me. "I've been reading her up to-day in your uncle's Homer and Dwight; chiefly in his Dwight, I confess, because I had the impression you are like her, and you are; and your cousin Alice. (I believe that's her name,) that sly little puss over there," laughing, tipping his head lightly toward aunt Rosalia's pretty cottage, which is seen from our upper balcony, "is Psyche. Psyche or Venus, which do you think?" In a moment I knew it was Psyche, and said so. I told him she was Psyche, the tender, beautiful creature, at sight of whom even Cupid, direct from Minerva, direct from Venus, lays down his bow and arrow, and loves. My mind went on with the story, giving to Alice even the spiritual attributes, which in the flat routine she calls her life, do not appear;

but which it may be will appear and attest themselves in forming a creature nearly perfect, if the time comes that she really lives.

Rosenvelt was Cupid, playfully persistent, willful Cupid; persistent now in adoring her, in building for her, as Cupid of old did for Psyche of old, the magnificent palace, surrounded by beautiful groves and beds of flowers, and in making her the mistress of invisible attendants, by whom her commands were instantly obeyed. I had lost my betrothed, it is seen; but I felt neither loss nor pain. On the contrary, I felt a relense, felt delight in the great beauty of palace, grove, and flower. I admired almost breathlessly the bridal pair standing in their midst?

And there was I, Minerva, alone. First, my heart sank a little, then it rose; and I knew that I was not alone. I was the eternal God's, the eternal God was mine; I was the dear world's, the dear world was mine. He, the blessed friend whom I am never to see again on earth, but who, on earth and in heaven, as I believe, is to be my blessed, my beloved, he was my Prometheus. He, far away, was to do his beautiful work, bringing down to men his gifts of fire and warmth from heaven; I, here, God being my helper, was to do those serviceable deeds, symbolized by Minerva of old when she span, embroidered in wools and silks, reared the olive, pressed out the oil and gave forth the branches to comfort men, to urge them to deeds of valor and humanity. I was so to live, that my life should not be simply patient, enduring, faithful in the obligatory forms of service, minutely obedient to the law, but should be spontaneously loving and heroic, so filled with bright, spiritual service, so filled with peace and love, that each word, each act, each look, each movement, even each condition of completest repose, should be, as it were, a gospel among men.

When I came out of my thought and was once more aware of realities, of the real mortal man at my side, I knew that I liked him heartily then, for the first time. Not loved, but liked. Looking at him, I saw that he was just coming out of his thought, was just drawing himself up to say, "What makes her so sly?"

He laughed, thinking how sly she is, just as she laughs, thinking how sly she is. He seemed to enjoy it just as she does. Pretty soon, when he was looking my hand over, examining each finger tip and nail, each vein upon the back, each line upon the palm, spanning the wrist with his palm and overlapping fingers, he said, "Your hand is a perfect one, Anna; larger than the smallest, and so it ought to be, for one of

your height and breadth; but the shape is perfect, and so will the softness and coloring be, by-and-by, when I get you away from all this kitchen work. I know beforehand how happy I shall be, taking care of you, doing everything for you, seeing that nothing rude or troublesome comes near you."

Later.

When he kissed my hand in ending, as a token of his tenderness toward me, I kissed his hand, as token of my tenderness toward him. When he would have drawn me toward him, as if it were to shelter me from the rudenesses and troubles of which he spoke, I knew that it was not for me to be so drawn and sheltered on his breast. On the contrary, I longed to draw his head to mine and give it rest. I did lay my palm on his forehead; he settled back as if tension were giving way through all his being, and said, "That is good!—how cool and good it is! my head must have been hot, but I didn't know it. You don't know, you can't think, how good your hand is on my head, Anna."

Then, after awhile, he sank into silence; then, without drawing himself up so as to look at me, he began to ask questions about my cousin Robin, about his plans, his means. And, when I told him what a hard time he has, how good his heart is, how indomitable his perseverance, he answered with quickness, "'Indomitable'—yes, this is the word for these granite men of your Granite State. I admire them. They're positively stupendous to my mind. Your Mt. Washington isn't a grander object in the natural world, than one of these earnest, striving, achieving men, in the psychological. Webster was yours; he is gone; and nowhere on this earth now, is there a Webster, or, as it seems to me, one equal to him in gentle, but, after all, indomitable power. Cass is yours—I don't know so much about Cass; but I know he must be a strong, good man, to get such a hold upon popular estimation and keep it so steadily, from the time that he is a very young man, until he is an old one."

CHAPTER XIII.

July 17th.

ROSENVELT sat where my mother and I were sewing, telling me how he used to hate study, and shirk it by one device and another; as he recounted, getting hold of one of my mother's little thin curls, stretching it out, pulling it more and more, asking her did it hurt? did it hurt awfully? laughing to see how perversely she said no, even when the sudden smart of it

drew tears to her eyes. He had at last, by a tweak more merciless than the rest, brought out against him a rattling discharge of hot protests, and was laughing his heartiest, when Johnny came in with the mail and threw it upon the table before us.

"The deuce!" said Rosenvelt, the expression of his face changing instantaneously to a look of extreme vexation and wonder. "Excuse me," he went on to say, after having got the cause of his disturbance—a tiny, embossed envelope—into his hand. "Excuse me." He did not look at us in speaking; he did not know with clearness what he said or did; his face was a deep red; it seemed to me, it seems to me now, that I saw tumult and throbbing in the swelling veins of his temples; his eyes had a blood-shot appearance, and out of the pupils, which seemed black as night, came uneasy gleams of green and red light. Or, so it seems to me, now that I look back to that moment. He tumbled the rest of the mail over, said, "That's for you, Molly; that's for Anna; that's for—I don't know whom—I'm going up now to read my mail—and have a long nap."

He left his chair feigning a yawn, throwing his arms out a little into a feigned "stretch." He feigned to go leisurely, stopping by the way to look out at a window and say something about a shower, to take a newspaper from the window-seat, look at it and read a few words, the heading of some common paragraph, to peep into a flower-vase and say to me, without looking at me, or in the least turning his head, but moving on toward the door instead, "You must see to that vase, Anna, some time; the flowers have drank the water all up. I'm going; good-bye, now."

We neither of us looked at our letters; or, at any rate, we neither of us in that moment cared enough about them to open them or touch them. I was cold; I shuddered, my jaws were unsteady with the cold as if it were mid-winter. I sewed; but just as a machine sews. I neither saw my work, nor gave direction to my fingers. I hardly knew that my mother was there, until she began to say, "It must be from her. No letter from anybody else could disturb him like that. It is too bad! Ever since he was twenty-two, now, he has been liable any time, to have his peace broken in upon any minute by her; for ten years, now, I don't believe he has known, hardly an hour at a time, what it was to feel perfectly at rest; for, although she had her hours of content, she must often be crying and torturing herself and him; and yet she couldn't let him go; she would say she couldn't live without

him; she would show herself so attached, she was really so magnificent a woman! *you* can have no idea of it! here at the North you never see such a glowing face! and I might say such a glowing form, such a glowing life; for she seemed all alive with her love, her beauty, her musical passion, her passion for all manner of elegance, for all manner of soft, luxurious dress, and for ornament in her rooms! Her flowers must be not only of the richest imaginable color and make, but of the softest, most delicious perfume; and then how she loved to group them, to turn her eyes on them and keep them there! She made a perfect little beauty of her babe; the softest lace, the softest linen, the finest embroidery! the little thing looked like an angel with beautiful clouds round it. She named it Angel, Angel Rose—just one of her fanciful, but, after all, appropriate whims! So he couldn't help being fastened to her. But it grew worse and worse. Another passion got hold of her and tore her; this is her word—'tore her,' a passion for—for a different life. It came, she said, after looking down into her baby's face, seeing how like a pure angel she was then, and might be, perhaps, all her life, if she could take her away to a condition of—to the *right* condition somewhere. Oh, dear! but 'tis the longest, saddest story! you've no idea what a sad story it is, Anna!"

"Perhaps it is one I should not hear, mother, unless he chooses to tell it to me," I said. My lips and tongue were parched; it was hard for me to speak at all.

A start in her movements, a flash crossing her features, corroborated my doubt. "I didn't think!" she said. "I didn't think but that I told you all, the day we spoke of this, or of his having had some connection, some entanglement before. I'm sorry; for, although he let his manner tell you something that day, and something more this, although I have no doubt his manner, over which he has as little control now as he had when a boy—and bless him! what a good, plump, honest boy he was! I have no doubt his manner would have let it all out, in a little while; and his words would all have come to help let it out; for he has the same honest disposition he has always had. You can know this, Anna, any day," speaking with tears in her eyes, "that, if he has done one great thing you must consider wrong, he has done a thousand generous things such as would never come into the thoughts of one of those men who haven't *his* fault, *his* error, but have others, which, in the sight of God, who sees everything—all the circumstances, are a thousand

times greater. I don't excuse him; he don't excuse himself; he accuses himself with terrible force, and calls himself a dog, a wretch, for the wrong he has done; but, what I want you to see is, that *others* do wrong too, and that he has done what he could to atone for his. He let her go; her, and the child he loved so well. He gave her a fortune for herself and the child; enough to support them, if they never lift a finger. He went himself to Limonar, Cuba, a delightful inland retreat for strangers and especially for invalids—and she wasn't very well; this was where she wanted to go and fix her residence; and he went and took a house for her and made all the arrangements. She had, of course, lived in close retirement at New Orleans, so that there was nobody to recognize her if ever so many went to Limonar from New Orleans; so she took another name, (I don't know what it was; Horace never told me,) and went. I was there at the time. I saw her; I had seen her once in awhile, from the first; my interest in my brother compelled me to. I somehow couldn't keep away from her and the child many weeks at a time when I was at New Orleans. So I used to go; and, as true as you live, I loved Clara! I loved the child! The child was nine years old, when they broke up last October; a beauty, they say, although I haven't seen her for three years now; a—ah! yes, Anna, I see what I am doing! But I don't care. I am sure he would tell you all, supposing some new trouble has come; supposing Clara is going to die, for instance, as I believe she is—for I thought she would. She looked like it; her voice sounded like it when she spoke; oh, dear!"

Evening.

I tried to reassure her, comfort her. I said that, although the outside of the letter had disturbed him, the inside might be perfectly pleasant to him.

"Yes, Anna, so you may think—and for your sake, dear, as well as his, I wish it might be so; but I fear it is impossible. In the first place, he must have known the writing; and, if I saw right, the post-mark was Northampton. Think how bad it will be if she has come there with the child! It will just about kill him; for you haven't the least idea how he suffers, when he does suffer!" She breathed with difficulty, loosened her collar with trembling fingers; and again, when it was done, sighed, "Oh, dear! a world of trouble, isn't it, Anna? He seemed pleased as a good little boy, when he thought he had got everything settled. 'Now it's all over,' he would say, as if it was a mountain off.

But we never know in this world, it seems to me now, whether a thing is really over with, however nicely it may seem to us to be smoothed and fixed."

"True," I said; adding that "I supposed none of our actions, connections, and their consequences, are ever really over with, in this world, or in another, so that our souls and the souls of others do not feel them. I supposed we must expect them to be stirring ever after; must know that, any time, they may appear before us, or within us, to bless or to afflict us. But, I added, one thing was certain, we could bear whatever came, and ought; since only so much could come as was just; all the rest God would lay off from us. Her brother could bear whatever had come. This earth, the affairs of this earth, were not all; there was a blessed, eternal heaven, ready to begin here on earth, to those who were ready to have it begin, and a God in whom we could all trust. We could all do *right*; and then there was nothing to fear." A blessed influx of peace came to me as I spoke; and I was glad to see that my words comforted my mother.

"Yes, to be sure!" she said. "To be sure, let what would come, it would destroy none of us. She was foolish to be so overcome." So saying, she began to look the mail over for what belonged to herself. There were notes from Mrs. Holmes, Mrs. Grant, and from Gen. Hastings. They came to say that my mother's invitations were accepted. (My mother had sent notes, the day before, inviting them to meet a large party of Boscowen and Franklin people here, next Wednesday.) "She was sorry they would come," she said, in renewed tremor; "was sorry she had thought of giving a party; she hardly saw why any one in this world should ever think of giving a party; of filling one's house up with all manner of people, some of them with vulgar, gossiping, inquisitive minds and habits. She had no doubt she had invited more than one woman who had nothing friendly in her toward anybody; whose meat, whose drink, and whose very breath of life it was to get hold of everything, all manner of what should be family secrets, and, worse still, all manner of ~~armises~~, if there were any looks she didn't understand, to hug them up, armfuls of them, and then carry them from house to house, opening them in every house, showing them and talking them over. Think! if this affair of Horace's were to get into the budget of such a woman, of a few such women! think what work they would make of it! and what was most provoking about such women, was, that they were ten times worse in God's

sight than the man they destroyed; since he had erred without hatred or malice, but with love; since they err through envy, malice, spite. Oh! it was awful that there were such women here in this world, where there would certainly be suffering enough if no man or woman ever abused and wronged another man or woman! Did I not dread such women terribly?"

I said that I dreaded all manner of sin, it made such work with the soul that God meant would be very loving and lovely, very happy. But I had seen, I said, that kind, pleasant thoughts could be put into the minds, that, left to other circumstances, were habitually censorious and unloving; so I liked to get near such women and see, that if charity does not dwell habitually in them, if she is often shut out and censoriousness shut in, in her place, they are ready, almost at any time, to let her in—to let charity in, I mean—if she stands and knocks with a warm heart, a warm, loving heart, that understands and is patient.

"Oh! well, my mother did not know; she dreaded them," she said. And then she went out through the hall to listen for sounds of her brother moving in his chamber. She came back sighing; saying she had heard no sound; and added, "The noisiest creature in the world, as you've had a chance to find out, when he is at ease; if anything comes to trouble him, you hear nothing more from him, perhaps for days. He hardly moves, speaks, eats, or sleeps. Poor boy! poor boy! I am sure now, you see," her eyes, anxious and troubled, raised to mine, "of his having had bad news. He would have been down before this time, or we should have heard him. He would have been down to hear what answers Gen. Hastings and the rest have sent."

She called him, later, at the foot of the stairs. He was sleepy, he said; he was going to have another nap; after that he would come down and hear about it. What? the general coming? all coming? ah! well, he would be down by-and-by to hear about it. Good-by.

So she came as she went, sighing, and her forehead knotted with anxiety.

He did not come down until my father returned and supper was on the table. Poor man! the inward storm still went on; the blood still pressed, the eyes still gleamed as they averted themselves. He did not eat; "He had been up there in the heat too long," he said; "he didn't feel like eating; he felt stupid. So the general was coming?"

"Ah?" my father said, brightening. "You've heard then? Well, I'm rather glad they're all

coming." His looks showed that he was indeed very glad. "They are rather superior people, all of them, as you'll see, when you've seen more of them." He was speaking to my mother. He did not look at her; that is not his way; he seldom looks at any one; he indicated that he was speaking to her, by turning his head a little toward her; or, at least, by not turning it toward Rosenvelt, as he always does when he speaks to him. "Rather superior people, they are; and I'm glad they'll be here; for, if one is going to do a thing, if one is going to give a party, it is best to do it in the best manner. That is, in the best manner possible. Rosenvelt, you'd better be helped to something. No? that's strange. I never lose a meal unless I'm sick; and that don't happen very often."

The moment my father left the room, my mother turned her eyes wholly on her brother. I said I would go and carry some things to Mrs. Edson and her children, and left them.

I saw nothing of Rosenvelt on my return, but was met at the door by my mother, who, having helped me in the completest silence to be rid of my basket, bonnet, and shawl, took me in completest silence into her sleeping room, seated herself in one chair, and motioned to me to be seated in another close to hers. And then, in low, rapid, earnest words she told me what follows.

Clara was at Northampton, Massachusetts, at the Florence Water-Cure, sick of consumption, likely to die. And the child was with her. Clara wrote that she came North because she *could not* die, leaving the child alone and unprotected. She would have taken her in her arms and carried her, she wrote, dragging her, sinking at every step, if this had been necessary, before leaving her unprotected. The poor child, she added, would be an orphan all the rest of her days on earth: this she, Clara, knew. She did not expect him to be anything to the child; only, would he sometimes, standing afar off, inquire, or commission some one to inquire and know how it was with her? If it was found that she pined and suffered in her isolated life, especially if it was found, by-and-by, that she was wronged, would he stir up some benevolent heart of her own sex to go and be kind to her?

Oh! if he would promise! "He showed me one page of the letter; I read it," said my mother, after having, in an agitated manner, given me this account. "It was enough to make your heart bleed; still, I could see that she forced herself to be calm, writing it; I know her way. I asked Horace—or, I saw how he looked and I said, 'This makes you feel terribly, don't it?' He said it made him feel as though he wanted to curse himself and die. What right had he, he said, to offer himself as a husband, having lived the life he had, to one noble and pure like you?"

"Oh!" cried I, out of a worn heart, that, at sound of the unmerited praise, bowed itself down even at Rosenvelt's feet, where he had remorsefully trampled upon his own heart, bewailing its single error. "If he puts his heart beside mine, comparing them, he does what he ought not; for my life has been very sinful; I have so much of the time been full of ungrateful, blind little complainings! I have been so often rebellious against all God's dealings with me! so often have been angry and wretched, when I ought to have been giving thanks! He must bring his heart, his life, and lay it before God; tell him so. God is the only one before whom he is to humble himself. Tell him this is what I think. Tell him I have not the least doubt, that, in God's sight, his heart is as clean as mine. Tell him we can, none of us, trust in what our own outward lives have been, in what our morality has been; but, when we've done all, our trust must still be in God. This makes us poor, wandering, erring creatures nearer equal than we any of us know, probably."

"Then you like him as well as you did before?"

"Better!—not for the ten-years-long error, of course; but for the goodness that shows itself in his turning away from it, and in the sorrow he feels this hour."

Now the knots on my mother's forehead relaxed themselves; now something of the old complacent tranquillity came and settled again about her mouth. She was glad, she said. She must go now and see to—she did not say what; but I knew when I came out and she was nowhere to be seen, that she had gone to her brother.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

THE INNER LIFE CLUB.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

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THE INNER LIFE CLUB.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

He was so common-place! Anything else would have been endurable. There would have been a dignity in bearing up under a system of regular Bluebeard cruelty—a poetical interest in suffering some great domestic treason—but a common-place husband! What woman of the nineteenth century, just awakening to a consciousness of having a mission, and searching eagerly for the proper way in which to fulfill it, would not have felt her powers blasted by such an infliction?

That was Emily Sumner's pet wretchedness, her skeleton in the cupboard; which she did not conceal so carefully as our mothers were wont to do such ghastly relics, shutting them closely up and locking the door, thereby depriving us of the satisfaction of studying our fathers' delinquencies; but she paraded it to the world, bones, death's head and all, to be inspected at leisure by the new-lights of her acquaintance, a class of persons always greatly interested in the study of such household anatomy.

Emily had been a wife two years—a long time in these days of modern miracles, when children are men and women at ten years of age, and take advantage of divorces—one of the most popular "institutions" of our great country—at twelve.

It was strange that when she married John Sumner she had not discovered his deficiency in that important, though unsubstantial gift, yea! a soul! But then she was an innocent—I meant ignorant—creature. Her life had been spent in a quiet country village, the faculties of her mind had not roused themselves, "she had not yet begun to live!" These two years had wrought a great change, and now, with her mind properly developed under the teachings of transcendental prophets, her misery stared her full in the face, and the galling yoke of matrimony weighed as heavily upon her shoulders as on those of any mission-seeker of them all.

John Sumner was a thriving merchant, who owed his success to his own industry, and had worked his way up to wealth as innocent of Wall street speculations as he was of modern philosophy. He had been spending a summer in the little town where Emily resided, and attracted by her freshness of thought and manner,

so different from the conventional type of young ladies, had allowed himself to fall in love, to propose, to be married.

They returned to New York to live, and Emily was installed the mistress of a pretty up-town mansion, with every comfort and elegance about her which affection and a well regulated taste could bestow.

The foolish girl really deemed herself happy; practiced her music and drawing in the day-time; actually perpetrated a little needlework; and, when John came home at night, was not too much fatigued to attend to his little wants, or so full of soul that she could not endure a regular nonsensical dancing party, or cry and laugh in the same breath at a play.

Sumner was weak enough to believe that this state of things could continue. He entertained a thousand obsolete opinions in regard to married life; he thought it was a woman's duty to interest herself in the cares of her household, as it was a man's to attend to his business. Perhaps there was a slight excuse for them; he had waited till thirty-five before marrying, and had never been to a Free Love lecture, nor read a page of the New World philosophers in his whole life.

But the change did come, and very unexpectedly. When they had been married a year, Emily met an old schoolmate of hers who had been for several years a wife, and was consequently well acquainted with the irksomeness of the chains which Emily wore so easily; was a determined, self-willed woman, with much plausibility of manner, with winning conversational powers, when she chose to lay aside her affectations; and was well adapted to the task of influencing and directing one as yielding and dependent in character as Emily.

Mrs. Manning became a constant visitor at the house, and as she usually came in the day-time, Mr. Sumner saw but little of her.

Soon there was a change in Emily's actions and mode of thought. Books were put in her hands of which she had never even heard before; theories unfolded in language so glowing that the vile reality beneath was hidden; philosophies expounded and transcendentalism made clear, till Emily gasped under the avalanche

and blushed at her own ignorance; struggled toward the new life which her friend promised; and slipped gradually away from the hold of happiness which had been in her grasp till then.

"Do you not know," said her friend, at last, "that your whole life is but a system of slavery?"

Emily attempted a feeble defence; she was not indignant, as she would have been two months before, but still, woman-like, she could not endure any imputation without a struggle.

"Alas! Emily," said Mrs. Manning, "it is too true, and equally so of nearly all women! What am I? It is not in my character to complain: but what I have suffered," and here she heaved a deep sigh, "cannot be imagined."

"Poor Eliza!" said Emily, pressing her hand.

"Call me Elise," murmured the sufferer, "the little band of sympathizing friends whom I have gathered around me name me thus; the other word is only an odious remembrancer of past anguish. And yet, barbarous as is my husband's conduct, I almost prefer it to the calm indifference of Mr. Sumner."

"Does he seem indifferent?" asked Emily.

"A perfect statue—an icicle! Wait a little and see for yourself! When he discovers that you are waking to a sense of your rights, to broader views of life, you will find how little he will sympathize with you; but on the contrary, will oppose you in every way, and lay down rules for you to follow, from which, I fear, you will not dare to rebel."

"I am not a child," said Emily, indignantly, "to be tutored and governed."

"Like other women, you have been so long a passive slave that you almost hug your chains. Look at your life—how is it wasted? The true powers of your mind lie dormant, you are occupied with petty aims which narrow down your life—life, did I say? You have none, poor child! you have never lived! Look at your occupation this moment!"

"Only a shirt-collar I am stitching for John," said Emily; "I made him a set when we first married, and he was so delighted with them that I began these, but they have been a month on hand, and are not done yet."

"You had better be educating your soul than stitching collars," said Mrs. Manning. "Woman has great duties before her. A new sphere is opening to her: and shame on the weak creatures who cling to their slavish past, instead of grasping at the grand existence in the broad-visioned future. You should hear Mrs. Malvina Hardscrabble talk: she would startle your sluggish spirit."

"She writes, doesn't she?"

"The greatest woman of the age! Writes! Her books should be printed in letters of gold—have you never read them?"

Emily pleaded her ignorance.

"Poor child! And your husband would never allow you, if he had his way—the men hate her, for she is as peerless as she is noble. I will bring you her last article—'The Actual of the Ideal'—a wonderful thing, so full of soul and intellect!"

She broke off in her raptures to adjust her bracelets, and glance toward the mirror which hung opposite.

"Do you like my dress?" she asked, abruptly, for, in spite of her spirit-yearnings, Mrs. Manning was a devotee of fashion, and her milliner's bills for a year would have startled any woman less intellectual, and more alive to the prosaic duties of life.

"I think these side trimmings for the skirt are delicious! But I have the sweetest dress for Mrs. Ford's ball—I am dying to have you see it."

"You go out a great deal, don't you?"

"My dear child, when you have been married as long as I have, you will know that any place is better than home! I seek society that I may forget my griefs—rush into excitement to drown the troubled voices that moan so bitterly within."

Emily had no answer ready for a burst of pathetic eloquence like that: she could only again press her friend's hand sympathetically and remain silent.

"I want you to see Mrs. Hardscrabble," said the fair victim of matrimonial cruelty, after a pause given to a mental review of her wrongs. "I warn you it will be a new era in your existence—she will feel for you, she will love you, and from that moment you will be unable to go on in this lethargic way."

"I should like very much to see her—"

"Now don't say if your husband is willing! Oh! Emily, you are so weak—do rouse the dormant faculties of your being. Go home with me—there is a meeting of the 'Inner Life Club' to-night—but no matter—go with me, and I promise that you will never regret it."

Emily would have objected, but at that moment a note was brought her from her husband, saying that important business would detain him down town till late in the evening.

"Important business!" exclaimed Mrs. Manning, with sarcastic emphasis, when the billet was read to her. "But be blind, Emily, be blind—better so than possess knowledge which blights the heart! But come, it is almost dark,

we shall reach home just in time for dinner, if you are not too long dressing yourself."

"Won't this dress do?" Emily asked, innocently; "there will be no one there but Mr. Manning."

"Mr. Manning? My dear child, I haven't seen him for a week—'important business detained him down town'—poor Emily! But I can tell you who will be there—Mr. Blondel, the young poet of whom I spoke to you the other day—go and make yourself as pretty as possible."

In as short a time as any woman could reasonably be expected to complete her toilet, Mrs. Sumner was attired to her friend's satisfaction. It was only a short drive to Mrs. Manning's residence, and once seated in her hostess' dressing-room, Emily had the exquisite pleasure, during the next hour, of watching the fair victim array herself for the evening.

Before the performance was complete, the servant announced that Mr. Blondel was below, and very soon the victim decided that she was ready to descend.

Emily entered the drawing-room with a slight tremor, for she was not accustomed to poets, and scarcely knew how she was to conduct herself in the presence of one of those singular bipeds. She found a tall, slight young man, with dark eyes and curling hair, a Byron collar, and an ironical manner, all devotion to herself and her companion, and railing at the world in general, as any poet who has read "Lara" knows that it is his duty to do.

The dinner passed off poorly as far as the appetites of the party were concerned. It was not to be expected that ethereal natures like those of the poet and Mrs. Manning could feed on the dross of earthly food; and although Emily was in truth very hungry, she was ashamed to let it be known, and so sniffed at the soup, coqueted with the meats, and looked languidly at the salad nearly as poetically as the bard himself. When it came to the dessert, she saw that the others took grapes and ice-cream, so she did the same, at the imminent danger of her night's rest, for hers was not a poetical stomach, and ices were sure to disagree with her.

Then they had coffee, and the poet smoked a cigarette rolled by his hostess' own fair fingers, the odor of which they both pronounced delightful, and in which Emily agreed, although the smell of the tobacco made her a little sick, and she had sundry qualms of conscience as she remembered John Sumner's horror of a cigar.

"It is eight o'clock," Mrs. Manning said at last; "Emily, get on your bonnet."

"Alas! that such hours must end!" sighed the poet.

"Where are we going?" asked Emily.

"To the 'Inner Life Club,'" replied her friend. "Miss Eleanora Darkstone is to speak, and you must hear her."

Between her desire to educate her soul and her fear of her husband's displeasure, Emily was speechless. She mutely obeyed her friend, and escorted by the poet, they drove away to the meeting which Mrs. Manning fervently trusted would do so much toward arousing her visitor's "dormant faculties," and teach her how truly to live.

It was a well lighted lecture room in which Emily found herself, when they were comfortably seated, and she had leisure to look around, sparsely filled with a crowd of what Mrs. Manning termed "intellectual people," but what less enlightened individuals call "strong-minded women and male Free Lovers."

Such specimens of femininity! Three-quarters of them wore spectacles—the greater number had spinster written in every fold of their gowns—several of the others looked quite capable of crushing the masculine gender entirely, and beginning a new era of things at once—while two or three, like Mrs. Manning, seemed half divided between the fashionable and the transcendental.

As for the men, they were of all sorts and sizes—the delicate and the stalwart—the deliriously poetic and the painfully animal—men with very long heads, and men with very high—men who wore long drooping ringlets, and never looked anybody full in the face—a collection of heads such as would have convinced any phrenologist of the truth of the doctrine of "human depravity," and sent their owners to the gallows without a second hearing.

Mrs. Manning pointed out several of the most important personages present, and then as the ceremonies of the meeting were about to commence, left Emily to listen in peace, while she divided her own time between sighs and furtive glances toward the poet.

Several gentlemen, with artistically arranged locks and picturesquely attired, first appeared upon the platform, and made short addresses in succession; then they seated themselves, and, after a brief interval, the heroine of the night made her appearance, and was received with considerable applause, somewhat needlessly prolonged by several outsiders who had found their way in, some moments before, and stood in a group near the entrance.

Miss Eleanora Darkstone was a tall, thin

woman, of an uncertain age, with her black hair cut short, and rolled under at the back of her head: that, and her mode of dress, giving her a look that was very singular. Her subject was "The Wrongs of Women," and eloquently she dealt with it, denouncing husbands in general, and assailing matrimony in a covert manner. She gesticulated, she shrieked, she threw her eyes about, and displayed her arms admirably; while the audience applauded her to the echo, and the group at the door began to jeer.

"Men are tyrants!" cried the fair one; "husbands are only anxious to reduce their wives to utter slavery."

"Bravo!" said all the old maids in concert.

"How do you know?" asked a voice from the entrance; "you never had one!"

"Women are just beginning to live!" continued Miss Darkstone, energetically.

"Most of you look as if you had lived for some time," said the same rude interloper.

"Shame!" cried the spinsters again.

"Put him out!" shouted a powerful female voice.

"Shame! shame!" said the transcendental males, feebly, a sort of faint echo of the courageous cries of the women.

"I am not to be crushed into silence," said Miss Darkstone, severely, glancing toward the crowd at the door.

"That's right!" shouted the intruders. "Go ahead, old girl! Crinoline forever!"

A general disorder began to prevail, but luckily some lawful defender of the public rights was near at hand, and the coarse crowd was promptly ejected.

Then did Miss Darkstone pour out a cataract of eloquence—then did she bid the men unsex themselves, since to bear their name was a disgrace. She reviled and encouraged the women in the same breath. She came down with a torrent of poetry and irreligion, till Emily's head was fairly turned, and she felt incapable of judging daylight from darkness.

The female lecturer at last retired, and the poet and Mrs. Manning led their pupil away, sufficiently overcome and excited by the proceedings to satisfy their utmost expectations.

It was still early when Emily reached home, and her husband had not returned. Between nervousness and a desire to be a heroine, she burst into tears at the information, retired to her room, and, donning a white dressing-gown, sat down to await his arrival.

When Sumner entered, he found a new Niobe seated by the fire. Explanations were useless, she would not be consoled. It was the first

exhibition of the sort he had ever witnessed, and he tried all sorts of expostulations and excuses, each more vain than its predecessor.

Emily insisted upon going to sleep, in a state of utter despair; and poor Sumner, after a hard day's work, lay for hours, wondering what could have brought about this disastrous state of affairs, and ready to blame himself for some unthought of crime.

The next morning, Emily awoke with a nervous headache, which rendered her somewhat penitent, so she graciously returned her husband's farewell kiss, and remained in bed till twelve o'clock, when Mrs. Manning called and insisted upon seeing her.

"You are looking pale," she said; "but through the pallor of sickness I discover the spirit-struggles which you have undergone."

"I have suffered very much," Emily replied.

"The air will do you good; I will take you out to drive, and then we will go to Mrs. Hardscrabble's."

"Oh! I cannot call any where to-day; I am really sick."

"There is no medicine could do you so much good as her conversation. I insist upon your going; it is her reception day, and you will probably meet several persons worth seeing."

Emily would have refused, but her old habit of being controlled was perhaps still stronger from her recent attack upon her husband, and she dressed herself without further opposition to her friend's wishes.

After a short drive, which seemed chiefly confined to shops where Mrs. Manning wished to make purchases, indulging every fancy to an extent that astounded Emily, and forcing her to empty the purse which she had taken with her more for show than use, they entered the carriage, and Mrs. Manning ordered the coachman to proceed to Mrs. Hardscrabble's residence, leaving Emily to put aside her little pangs in regard to the uselessly spent money until a more convenient season.

When they entered the hall of the illustrious lady's house, the hum of conversation was distinctly audible, a sonorous female voice predominating over the others. The servant ushered them into the parlor, and Emily found herself in the presence of the distinguished personage of whom she had heard so much of late.

There were several gentlemen present, all of the type of those present at the preceding night's lecture, and two or three ladies modestly seated a little in the rear of the lady's easy-chair, around which the males were grouped in every variety of picturesque attitude. The

poet, Blondel, was standing a little distance off, leaning against the imitation marble mantle, his dark curls drooping in graceful confusion over his forehead, and his eyes gazing with painful intensity at the ceiling.

The rooms were long and narrow, furnished with very doubtful taste, and with articles of so many different hues, that they gave one unpleasant recollections of a second-hand furniture shop—but there was no such association. Nearly everything in the rooms was a present—nothing more decidedly showed Mrs. Hardscrabble's genius, than the way she had of drawing gifts out of her friends.

The lady herself was tall and gaunt, almost bony, we are sorry to say, wore her hair drawn tightly back from her projecting forehead, black "mits" on her hands, her feet crossed upon a stool, both in attitude and dress betraying a strong-minded and mission-elected female.

The gentlemen made way as the two ladies approached the chair, and Mrs. Hardscrabble greeted them with extreme cordiality, although she did not rise from her seat—she was almost royal in the prerogatives she claimed.

"Ah, gay humming-bird of fashion," said the great lady, patting Mrs. Manning's cheek, "you have been absent for a long time, but I forgive you, since you have brought me this sweet flower of whom you have so often spoken to me."

"You know I have so many engagements," said Mrs. Manning.

"I know, I know! Poor dear!" affecting to lower her tone, and glancing sympathetically toward the company, who gazed pityingly at Mrs. Manning, while the fair victim sighed and looked a martyr of the purest type.

"We will converse anon," whispered Mrs. Malvina to Emily, as she waved them back with a stately gesture. Emily followed Mrs. Manning to a sofa, and sat listening to the conversation which went on around her, while her friend lent an attentive ear to the whispers of the poet who immediately joined them.

Mrs. Hardscrabble turned to the spectacled man next her, and continued a harangue that had evidently been broken off by the entrance of the ladies.

"Where was I?" she asked, in a gracious way.

"You left off at the word idea," said the spectacled man, in a dry, measured tone, as if reading from notes.

"Ah, yes, ah—as I said—I make all distinction between the idea self-ideal, and the idea that is idea controlled."

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"A beautiful sentence," said the poet, glancing at Emily, who bowed assent because she did not understand it, and consequently concluded that it must be something very fine.

"The idea that is idea controlled," pursued Mrs. Hardscrabble, waving her right hand, and so displaying a rent in her lace "mit," "now the ideality of an ideal woman would be ideally expressed in every word and act, but look at the poor creatures around us—slaves—abject slaves!"

She launched forth in maledictions against the race of husbands, and startled Emily by her eloquence as much as she appeared to charm the others.

Mrs. Malvina Hardscrabble was the oracle of the set, and worshiped accordingly. She had written books full of bad philosophy and atrocious Americanisms—lectured on the rights of woman with distinguished success—she was a spiritualist, and a transcendentalist, and had been a Fourierist, and nearly everything else. There was no ism in which she had not dabbed, no modern philosophy that she had not studied. She had been abroad, and was consequently a judge of art—she had kissed George Sands' hand—supped with Alphonse Karr—corresponded with Miss Weber, and been snubbed by Carlyle—who could dispute her claims to genius? She had written poetry in years gone by—when intimate with a second-rate rhymster—and conducted transcendental magazines. It was not wonderful that she had gained fame—the vulgar might sneer at her, but by her coterie she was adored. Coarse daily papers might ask what had become of the he-Malvina Hardscrabble, but secure in her strong-mindedness, faithful to her mission, the original Malvina disdained to answer, and the votaries at her shrine never cared to inquire.

They called her the modern Corinne, and the new Sappho, a happy blending of Madame de Staél and Charlotte Corday—they wrote verses to her—they made her presents—they put her at the head of half a dozen Moral Reform Societies, and allowed her to keep the money—(which she did faithfully)—they gave her a hundred pet names, of which Evangeline and Miranda were the most common-place—they set her on a pedestal like a gold idol, refusing to look for the feet of clay, and there they worshiped and chanted her praises to her heart's content.

When the callers had dispersed, Mrs. Hardscrabble beckoned Emily to her, and they had a long conversation which fluttered and confused the poor child beyond belief. Mrs. Malvina

she felt the clasping of the magnetic chain when her guest appeared—henceforth they would be friends, communion of souls and sympathetic converse would they hold together. Emily should be her pupil, her darling! Then she kissed them both affectionately—asked after Mrs. Manning's corroding grief, and dismissed them in order to write a letter for the "Female Palladium," containing a notice of her own charms, affecting to be written by an enthusiastic young female who had recently made her a visit.

Emily went home ready to snatch at the new life they told of, and thoroughly convinced that her husband was a tyrant. The next few days were anything but happy ones in John Sumner's household, and he sought vainly for the cause of change which had come over the quiet happiness of the past year.

Emily wept much and fretted more. She studied German, in order to read Kant, and frightened her senses out over the wonderful revelations of the latter day mystics.

Very soon she was invited to a reunion at Mrs. Hardscrabble's house; and she went, merely informing her husband that she was going to spend the evening with a friend of Mrs. Manning.

She was petted and made much of by the whole set, for they had received directions from the oracle, who saw in her a new proselyte.

When the truth dawned upon John Sumner, and he saw the dangerous associations into which his wife had been led, he suffered greatly, as any right-minded man must have done; but, believing it only a passing caprice, of which a little reflection would cure her, he essayed rather to turn the whole set and their principles into ridicule than to break off the growing intimacy by more peremptory measures.

But this her advisers had taught her to expect—ridicule, cruelty—and she met all admonitions with tears, or a stubborn obstinacy, which is the chief weapon of weak natures.

Sumner had never met Mrs. Hardscrabble; but the notoriety which she had gained was especially offensive to him, even though he was unacquainted with the woman's personal character.

One evening, not very long after the reunion, where Emily had been an object of so much flattering attention, Sumner and his wife were seated quietly at home, when the chiefs of the Hardscrabble set, including the poet and Mrs. Manning, descended upon the house, led by their general.

Emily was a good deal alarmed, but Mrs.

Manning's whispers reassured her, and roused the spirit of opposition which had of late become active in her mind. So she presented her husband to Mrs. Hardscrabble and the rest of the party, and prepared to let events take their course.

This step was by no means an impromptu affair with Sappho. She had for some time been anxious to encounter the tyrant who held her young friend in awe, and overthrow his power by showing the unfortunate slave what a pygmy he was when his giant's mantle was pulled off his shoulders.

Sumner received the company with his accustomed urbanity of manner; and when Mrs. Manning had exhausted her small ammunition of coquettices upon him, Malvina herself took him in hand.

In less than ten minutes she had led the conversation—no mortal could have told how—upon her favorite topic, and was discoursing volubly concerning the wrongs of women—the necessity of their breaking their chains and asserting their rights.

"But I don't see that cutting off their hair and shortening their dresses is going to benefit them materially," Sumner said, good naturedly.

"Every step toward the reform is an important one," retorted Mrs. Headstrong; "when woman quits the garb of her slavery she has thrown off a portion of her shackles."

"Our grandmothers managed to get along very comfortably—"

"Grandmothers have been a curse to the women of the nineteenth century!" exclaimed the lady. "They have burthened us with their ignorant superstitions in regard to duty till we are powerless; but women shall throw them off. I say they shall, sir; they shall not drag the weight of a dead Past into the far-visioned Present."

That was the style of eloquence which always produced a sensation among Mrs. Hardscrabble's clique, and she looked at John to see what effect it had produced, but he only bowed, and said, laughingly,

"With all my heart!" He turned to Emily, and, in a whisper, advised her to order some refreshments.

"None," said Mrs. Hardscrabble, overhearing him, "none, I beg! Our little circle loves best 'a feast of reason and a flow of soul.'"

Still Emily insisted, and Sumner watched with silent amusement how naturally the whole party took to the "flow" of champagne as well. The poet and Malvina did the most honor to Emily's little feast; but the oracle conquered, and John

marveled at the quantity of food which was necessary to sustain her eloquence.

But unfortunately the discussions took a warmer tone, and Sappho grew angry, as even less gifted women will do when they can neither disarm nor convince their opponent.

"Women must assert their rights," she repeated, for the fortieth time, "they must be developed!"

"Let it be physically as well as mentally," said Sumner, good natured as ever; "certainly the women of this age need bodily training, as well as spiritual."

"They tell of a monster in the olden time," she cried, with a terrible voice, clutching wildly with her hands, "who devastated a smiling country, and to appease whom it was necessary to offer up human victims! The allegory is equally true to-day as it was then! Man is that monster, marriage the altar, and woman the sacrifice!"

She fell back in her chair overcome; while Mrs. Manning sighed audibly, others applauded, and Sumner laughed outright.

Altogether the evening was a failure, and Mrs. Hardscrabble departed with her satellites, mentally vowing vengeance against the man who had braved her, although to her friends she professed to consider him utterly crushed.

"And these are the people," said John, mournfully, when alone with his wife, "whose society you prefer to your husband's! Oh! Emily, drop the whole thing now! What do you care for their new-fangled philosophies; we were happy before; do not destroy your home!"

But argument was thrown away, entreaties wasted, authority rejected with contempt. Things in the house went on from bad to worse—everything was neglected—the servants running riot, and Emily engaged with her transcendental friends, or poring over their books.

Sumner did not act as many men would have done under the circumstances; he did not forsake his home, or treat his wife badly; but, imperceptibly stemming the tide with all the force of his strong will, he sought about for some means which should disgust Emily with her present course of folly.

When the year ended, Emily was like another woman. She seldom attended the clubs formed by her friends, for that John positively forbade; but she addled her brains in every way in her power, aided by Mrs. Hardscrabble.

She grew dictatorial and exacting, jealous with the rest, conjuring up all manner of fancied wrongs, and tormenting her husband to the extent of a woman's ingenuity.

She became an immense talker, detailing the oracle's phrases in fine style, and stunning Sumner with her borrowed eloquence. Meal-time became a season of torture! At breakfast she reasoned over the coffee, she lectured across the hash, she dropped philosophy into the omelette, and scattered transcendental theories on the toast. She chopped logic for dinner, and spilt injured tears into his tea-cup, making herself as ridiculous as only a good woman can who feels called upon to be strong-minded.

"Oh!" said John, in despair, "some women are born to missions, some achieve missions, and some have missions thrust upon them, but for heaven's sake don't act as if all three were part and portion of your destiny! A nervous woman would be a blessing! What are hysterics and spasms in comparison to new-light fits and Sappho fevers!"

Of course these remarks were duly repeated to the oracle, whose hatred was by no means diminished by hearing them.

So Emily had been a wife two years, and her skeleton in the cupboard grew daily, and overshadowed the whole house. She was pitied and petted by the entire Hardscrabble set. Mrs. Manning engrossed the poet, and the other men were frights, so luckily there was no "spiritual flirtation" in the case, though it might perhaps have wakened her to a sense of her duty and brought back her senses, for the Lord meant Emily for a good woman, if she would only have been satisfied to let His work alone.

Still Emily did not find herself happy, though she never allowed her conscience to speak, and tried to believe that it was only owing to her ignorance that her past life had brought her so much contentment.

She was astonished to find how much petty jealousy, how many contemptible rivalries existed between the noble souls who formed Mrs. Malvina's circle. The men had seldom a good word to say for one another, and as for Mrs. Manning and her poet, they sneered openly when their names were mentioned.

All these things pained and perplexed Emily; Mrs. Hardscrabble herself seemed inclined to condemn women in general, even while she was so boldly asserting their rights; there was scarcely one of their acquaintance whom she did not sigh over when they were absent, however much she might caress them when present. But she told Emily that she was her chief favorite—so unlike the others—she was all soul.

"There is Mrs. Manning, my dear; poor Elise! She is a sweet creature, but so weak!"

"She is very unhappy," Emily said.

"Yes, no doubt of that. Her husband is a brute; but then they are all that, every one of them, and I do wish Elise would be a little more circumspect in her conduct."

Faint misgivings in regard to her friend's actions had occasionally crossed Emily's mind, but she always put them resolutely by, and even then she forbore to make any reply to her visitor's remark.

The oracle untied her bonnet strings, and leaned comfortably back in the arm-chair.

"I have come to sit an hour with you," she said; "I am weary of mental labor, and your fresh and natural conversation will be a relief to me."

Now no mortal ever found an opportunity to speak a connected sentence when in Mrs. Hardscrabble's company, but Emily bowed her head, and was as much pleased with the flattering preference shown her conversational powers as if she really expected to talk herself.

"My dear," said Sappho, arranging her poodle-dog ringlets, "would it cause you pain if I were to say that I am disappointed in you?"

Emily avowed that it would.

"Then, my love, I will not say it! But I did think that before this you would have taken a more decided stand in the great work going on."

"I could do so little," faltered Emily, "I am not gifted like you."

Sappho waved her hand, shrouded in the eternal black mitten, as if to say that was not to be expected.

"But in your own private life, my dear, you should have proceeded differently. You are still in bondage—forgive me, but it is true; you stand dreadfully in awe of that man, Sumner."

"But what can I do?"

"As a first step enter upon a course of consistent opposition—mind, I say, consistent! Follow it out well, and you will have done much toward liberating yourself."

"But he so seldom interferes with me."

"Make him do it; don't put up with indifference! There are ten thousand ways of trying him every hour. Oh! I like to see these lords of creation taught that those they deem their subjects are their superiors."

"Yes," said Emily, dubiously.

"Above all things," said Mrs. Hardscrabble, with imposing gayety, "take the front side of the bed—take it and keep it; there is nothing so annihilating! When I first took up my mis-

sion, I had many struggles with Hardscrabble, as we all must have with those tyrannical brutes of men; but when I determinedly put him over against the wall his obstinacy was quite crushed out of him. Nothing like it, my dear, depend upon that! The foreside of the bed—claim it—keep it, and you are free!"

"Oh!" said Emily, faintly, quite overcome by the majesty of her friend's manner.

But the long harangue which followed, in regard to her duties to her sex, had its effect upon her; and, when the protectress of feeble women went away, Emily had quite determined to take a decided step, and assert her right to the front side of the connubial couch.

She was very nervous that evening, and consequently launched out more eloquently than usual in regard to female privileges, to all of which Sumner did not appear to listen in the slightest degree.

Finally Emily marched off to her chamber, with a *Lady Macbeth* tread, and when Sumner entered the room he found her comfortably ensconced in the part of the bed he had been accustomed to consider his own.

"Emily, child," he said, quietly.

"I am going to sleep here," she replied, shutting her eyes resolutely.

Sumner gave a prolonged whistle, but said never a word, and took to the wall with a meekness which would have satisfied even Mrs. Hardscrabble.

Emily was a long time getting to sleep, for she was a sad coward, and terrible presents took possession of her mind. If a burglar should get in—if there was truth in the old stories of ghosts! She felt almost inclined to relinquish her new territory, but the thought of Mrs. Hardscrabble's scorn of such weakness deterred her, so she covered up her head and lay still as a mouse.

At length she fell into a troubled sleep, in which she was haunted by all sorts of fearful spectres: women in male attire, husbands in ruffled night-caps, Mrs. Hardscrabble riding a broom-stick and chasing Sumner across a prairie. At last somebody was pushing her down a precipice—she struggled, and caught wildly at the rocks for support, but in vain—she fell—down—down—down—and woke with a shriek to find herself deposited on the floor!

She picked herself up, half frantic with terror, and in the dim light she saw her husband partly risen on his pillow silently regarding her. In a moment there came a low chuckle—Emily flounced into bed—not a word was spoken by either. There she lay all night, not daring to

go to sleep, and irritated by John's tranquil breathing.

Very early in the morning she rose, dressed herself, and hurried out of the room. It was a full hour before Sumner made his appearance, and found her seated at a more neatly arranged breakfast-table than he had seen for months. Still he made no allusion to what had passed, and the meal was finished very quietly, though there was a quizzical look in his eyes all the time which nearly drove poor Emily out of her senses.

When he had gone, she sat down and cried heartily. The utter ridiculousness of this last move had opened even her eyes, and she determined to keep quiet for some time to come. She even mended an old coat when her crying fit was over, and if the morning she spent was not a pleasant one, it was certainly of a nature to have a beneficial effect upon her.

About noon her servant came in, quite terrified. Mrs. Manning's French maid had been there with a terrible story, which, between fright and bad English, was quite unintelligible; but Lucy was sure that Mrs. Manning was either dying or dead.

Emily was greatly alarmed, and hastily prepared to go out. In the hall she met her husband, who had just entered, looking very pale and sad.

"Why, what brought you home?" she asked, more frightened than ever.

"Where are you going?" he returned.

"To Mrs. Manning's. Cecile has been here half crazy; I am afraid Eliza is dying."

Sumner did not attempt to detain her, and she hurried away. She found Mr. Manning's house shut up, and, in answer to her nervous ring, a servant opened the door, looking quite stupefied with evil news.

"Is Mrs. Manning in?" she asked.

"No," he said, confusedly. "That is—oh! what shall I say?"

"Who is there?" called a man's voice from the stairs.

"Mrs. Sumner, sir."

"Let her in," was the reply.

It was Mr. Manning who spoke; and, although Emily had never seen him but once, she stood in mortal fear of him. But she entered the hall, and the servant shut the door and motioned her to go up stairs.

Emily went up more dead than alive, and, entering her friend's dressing-room, found herself face to face with Mr. Manning, but looking so haggard and wan that she scarcely knew him. The room was in great disorder: dresses

thrown down, boxes open, jewel-cases scattered about, a lamp still dimly burning on the table, and, to add to the dreariness of the scene, there came at intervals the low wails of a child from the inner room.

"Where is Eliza?" gasped Emily.

"You came to see her?" he asked, in a hollow, unnatural voice; "this is not the place to seek for her."

"She is not dead?"

"Worse, madam! Look about you; listen to that child; don't you understand? she is gone!"

Emily sank almost fainting into a chair.

"I sent for you to come up," he continued. "I wished you to see this—you were my wife's friend—she made you nearly as foolish and mad as herself—beware now of the last step! I know your husband, he is a good man; I have deserved this, perhaps, but she drove me away from her by her conduct. No wonder you look stupefied. I tell you she has gone—gone with that cursed man whom I ought to have killed a year ago—with Blondel."

Emily covered her face with her hands. She could neither weep nor stir. Manning drew her toward the inner room, and pointed to a little girl sobbing and writhing upon the bed.

"She is three years old," he whispered; "think of her growing up crushed by her mother's shame!"

Overpowered by horror, Emily turned to fly.

"Yes, go," he said, in the same fearful tone; "this is no place for you. Go back to your home; you are innocent still, let this spectacle save you! Go to your husband and pray for pardon—he is a better man than I was and will forgive you."

Emily flew down stairs, and into the street, with the child's shrieks and moan for "mamma! mamma!" still ringing in her ears. How she reached home she did not know, but when she gained her room, Sumner was waiting for her.

He fell at his feet in a paroxysm of hysterical grief, and it was a long time before he could restore her to anything like sanity.

"I knew it," he said, when she tried to tell what had happened. "She went away last night. I thought it would cure you to go to the house."

"Oh! John! John!"

"Nor is this all. Do you know that Mrs. Hardscrabble's husband has been for ten years in a mad house, driven there by wretchedness at home, and then by drink?"

That was a terrible morning to Emily; but, after a time, she grew more composed, and could converse at least connectedly.

Neither of them ever revealed what passed in that interview, but certain it is that from that day peace and happiness returned to their dwelling, and neither modern philosophy nor transcendental cant ever again found an entrance there.

Mrs. Hardscrabble's after career will, of course, become a matter of history, so that it does not become us to speculate upon it here. It was at one time asserted that she thought of

emigrating, with her followers, to a recently talked of territory, and there establishing a state, in which the principles involved in her doctrines might be freely carried into effect under her fostering care and chieftainship. But, as nothing more has been said concerning the movement, it probably died out, or at least was allowed to fall into repose, until the world has reached a more enlightened era than even this boasted nineteenth century.

THE LOST DIAMOND.: CHAPTER I.

BY FANNY L. MACE.

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THE LOST DIAMOND.

BY FANNY L. MACE.

CHAPTER I.

It was past sunset, and the dusk was beginning to creep over the brown hills of Southern Virginia. My steed, which had been making good progress since the early dawn, began to fag and grow restless; and I, too, in spite of the strange mission that had heretofore filled my thoughts, almost imprecated the fate which had sent me wandering in this bleak region. In vain, with straining eyes, I scanned the Western horizon. I knew I must be near my destination, and yet I saw no glimpse of the gabled house which had been pointed out to me as my mysterious goal. Only bare hills stretched away, out of sight.

"I believe the ghost has cheated me," I muttered, impatiently, drawing up my horse, and once more scanning the landscape. "Let me see again what these words mean," and I drew from my pocket-book a note written in a cramped and ancient hand.

"Arthur Dunallen," thus it read, "seven years ago, come Christmas Eve, your kinsman, your father's elder brother, fell by the hand of Rupert Ware. To-night you are of age, and his blood calls to you from the ground. Seek, among the most western summits of the Alleghanies in — county, for a large gabled house, of grey stone, half in ruins. You will know it, for it bears the name of Ware Grange. There you shall see and speak with

DUNALLEN'S WRAITH."

This singular communication, as startling as it was quaint, had been deposited on my dressing-table, three days previous, by an unseen hand. No one had seen the messenger come or go; no one had heard a footstep, but when I rose from my couch on the morning of my birthday, the note, smoothly folded and legibly directed, was the first thing upon which my eyes fell.

Though scarcely more than a child at the time of my kinsman's disappearance, the circumstances were still fresh in my memory. He was a wealthy landholder, of Scotch descent, owning large estates in the richest section of Virginia. Report said that in his youth he had been a wild rover—that he had done deep wrongs—but of this I know little. I remembered him

as a grave, middle-aged man, of thoughtful, even melancholy countenance. He suddenly disposed of all his estates, and, having converted his wealth into money, went into the mountains to visit an old friend, previous to embarking on a long European tour. He never reached that friend's house. I remember well the bewildered anxiety, followed by dread and despair, with which my father waited for news of him, but there came neither tidings nor return. A long and faithful search was equally fruitless, and at last he was given up for lost. His wealth had disappeared with him, all except a valuable diamond, a token of some early passion, which he had left in his brother's care. Two years later my father died, leaving me the last of the Dunalleens, and the diamond was my sole inheritance.

My early lessons of self-dependence had imbued me with a courageous and adventurous disposition. It was, therefore, without hesitation, though with extreme wonder and some unpleasant forebodings, that I accepted this mission. I was not superstitious; I had no faith in the ghostly mien of the epistle, but there was a mystery in it which puzzled me, and which I was impatient to solve. I resolved to devote the Christmas holidays to this enterprise, and answer in person the strange summons. Whatever was my uncle's fate, I felt sure it would now be made clear to me, and, abandoning my studies, I set out on horseback for the mountains.

"Cheer up, my good Selim!" I cried, stroking the neck of my steed, when again I had folded the note and concealed it in my portmanteau. "Cheer up! or the night will overtake us in this dismal region, and I, too, may share the fate of the elder Dunallen."

I put spurs to my horse, and soon we had left another weary mile behind; but now, crowning a distant hill, I saw, by the last rays of daylight, a large stone house in the vicinity of a rude little hamlet. At the same moment I overtook a countrywoman, with a basket of wares, resting by the roadside, and I paused to question her.

"What do you call yonder house, friend?" I asked, pointing to the gray roof in the distance.

The woman gazed at me curiously before she answered, and I perceived a restless, uncertain glitter in her large black eyes.

"It was Ware Grange," was her reply—"and years ago we had right merry Christmas feasts there, but for seven years it has had no master and the gate has been shut to strangers."

A thrill shot through me as I listened to these words. It was the same name which my unseen guide had told, and for the same length of time it had been desolate. All my previous doubts vanished. I knew now that a revelation was to be made to me, and I was eager to stand face to face with the mystery.

"There is a decent inn at the village," added my informer, thinking that my silence proceeded from disappointment at not being accommodated at the Grange. "We call it the Red Thistle, and it's kept by honest Sandy Fitzroy."

I threw her a piece of silver for her information, and would have ridden away, but, springing from the ground, she suddenly caught my hand and held it fiercely, while an expression of intense emotion was visible on her face.

"The diamond! the diamond!" she cried, her eyes flashing with passionate excitement. "Let me see it! Let me see it! Hold it near to me!"

Wondering not a little at this strange manifestation, I held the hand on which the ring was placed, toward her. Her breath came quick—she touched it with her fingers.

"I had one once," she said, speaking slowly and with strong agitation, "and while I kept it, I was happy. But I let it leave me, and with it I lost my peace, my heart, my soul. All lost—lost!"

She dropped my hand as abruptly as she had taken it, and sinking down by the roadside she burst into tears. Pitying the poor lunatic, for such I felt she must be, I would have stayed longer and attempted to soothe her wild grief, but she saw my intention, and catching up her basket, hurried out of sight. I rode thoughtfully on toward the Grange.

I found the inn with no difficulty, a low eaved building with a red thistle painted over the doorway, and having seen to the accommodation of Selim, I entered and sat down by the fire which blazed in the great open chimney. A group of farmers were lounging about the room, and a red cheeked lassie was weaving Christmas wreaths to decorate the dingy little windows. Honest Sandy, in great commotion at having a strange gentleman in his house, flurried about and urged his hospitalities upon me. I was in too much agitation of mind to

feel the least craving for food, though I had ridden so far; but I swallowed a glass of wine and threw myself on a long settle to rest, before proceeding to the Grange and to my promised meeting with the Wraith.

For a while so absorbed was I, and lost in vague surmises, that I paid no heed to the buzz of conversation which the countrymen kept up. But by-and-by, a few words startled my ear, and arrested my attention. I listened.

"There never was a kinder man. Was a poor body in distress, he was glad and ready to give him a lift. But he had a curious look with his eyes. I could not be easy when he looked at me."

"No one knew that he ever had an enemy," chimed in my host. "I believe he went suddenly mad and drowned himself."

"He died no natural death," said the first speaker. "Who ever heard of one dying in his bed and then haunting his house ever after?"

"There is a ghost, then!" I cried, growing excited as the conversation proceeded. The peasants, eyeing me curiously, responded,

"Yes, sir. Many a man of us has crossed the hill at midnight and seen the spectre marching up and down the garden walk."

"Describe him, I pray of you."

"A tall, gaunt man in sheeted white," said Sandy, while a shiver crept over the whole company. "He walks in long strides up and down the garden. Did you ever hear of him, stranger?"

I did not want any of these people to know my errand, so I shook my head, and leaving the room, stood a moment in the open door. The stars blinked brightly overhead. It was a clear night and I was not afraid nor superstitious.

"Why not go at once and solve this doubt?" I asked myself. "Delay will but torment and harass my already excited mind. The ghost sent for me and desires to see me. I am come at his bidding; and the sooner we meet, the better."

No sooner thought than done. With swift steps I crossed the fields that lay between the inn and the Grange. I thought of my lost kinsman and remembered his kindness to me in my childhood. It had been told me that I was to be his heir. What if some rich inheritance was even now to be bestowed on me!

The stones of the old court-yard gave a melancholy and lonesome ring as I crossed them, and the solitary fir tree by the gate swung its boughs to mournful music. It seemed a sad, weird place, a fit haunt for unquiet spirits.

All these outward tokens only increased my

anxiety to go onward. I gave a loud knock at the door. Some moments elapsed, and then it creaked on its hinges, and a withered old man, holding a lamp above his head, peered out upon me.

I expected to have some difficulty in effecting an entrance, but the old servant, scanning my appearance, merely said,

"Are you Mr. Dunallen?"

I was expected then, in this strange place! Replying wonderingly in the affirmative, the door was swung open and I was led across a wide hall to a door in the farther end. This too was opened. I looked in, as the servant drew back, and for a moment paused in dumb astonishment.

CHAPTER II.

THE room was richly, even gorgeously furnished. Curtains of crimson fell in heavy folds over the windows, pictures in massive frames adorned the walls, lounges and couches of velvet were placed here and there, inviting to luxurious ease.

A large astral lamp burned on a centre-table, and in its light stood a beautiful girl of seventeen or eighteen, richly attired and waiting to receive me.

"Mr. Dunallen?" she inquired, hesitating a moment as I approached her.

I bowed in silence—it seemed to me I was in an enchanted palace.

"I am Geneva Ware," she said, simply, and showed me a seat. "Reuben," she added, addressing the servant who stood without, "bring refreshments for Mr. Dunallen; he has traveled a long distance and must be weary."

"I wish for nothing," I exclaimed—"indeed I will taste nothing. I stopped a half hour at the inn."

Her large gray eyes rested inquiringly on me a moment. "At the inn!" she repeated slowly. "You should have come directly here. Reuben, send immediately for this gentleman's horse and baggage."

I would have prevented him, but her quiet, authoritative manner checked me.

"Since she will have it so, I will stay," I said to myself, "and if this is the ghost, it is well worth journeying to see."

As the servant retired she turned toward me again.

"Do not ask me how I knew that you were coming here," she said, while her eyes fell under my gaze. "You are to stay with us a few days until a certain object of importance is accomplished. In the meanwhile—"

"I will respect the mystery of your house," I interrupted. "Do not fear that I shall trouble you with idle questions. I acknowledge that I do not understand the object of my journey hither, nor the strange rumors that I have heard. Yet I came by request and will remain cheerfully."

She thanked me, more by the expressive glance of her eyes, than by the movement of her lips, and taking some unfinished embroidery, she sat down near the fire. The fire-light, steady and bright, fell on her figure; and I looked at her, with a certain admiration, mingled with awe. Her features were softly moulded, bands of brown hair were folded over a Grecian forehead, her lips were mildly beautiful, and it was only when she lifted her eyes, that I became conscious of a quiet strength and dignity of mien, unusual in one so young. There was nothing of the coyness of girlhood about her, neither was there too much assurance, but a maturity of face and bearing, which betokened a life of thought, perhaps of trial.

A few moments she sewed rapidly on her embroidery, but gradually she allowed her work to cease, and a troubled expression came over her face.

"You spoke of rumors," she said, suddenly lifting her eyes. "It cannot be that tales of our unfortunate house have reached the great city, the world in which you live."

"No," I replied; "until three days since I was not aware of the existence of such a family; nor had I ever heard the name of Rupert Ware; nor do I yet know who he is, or how connected with yourself."

"He was my father," she said.

"Was?" I repeated. "Then he is not now living?"

She hesitated a moment, and looked pained. "When I was a child," she said, "there was not a happier house for leagues about than this. My father and I lived together, and were sufficient society for each other; for my mother had died before my recollection—yet, even in the midst of his lavish kindness and affection, I perceived, as I grew older, that he bore a secret trouble. It grew upon him until it took possession of all his faculties. Suddenly he disappeared. I do not say he died. No one knew of his death, but he vanished from human knowledge. It is all like a terrible dream to me."

"This is a singular story," I said, when she had concluded, "and it renews in my memory the stories that the villagers told in yonder inn. Was it all their fancy that the unquiet master

of the Grange still walks in his accustomed haunts?"

Her eyes, which were bent upon me when I commenced my question, evaded my eyes as I concluded.

"That I cannot answer you," she said. "If it is so, you will surely behold him. But this is a dark theme, and suggests thoughts too melancholy."

Reaching forward, she took a guitar from its nook in the corner.

"Perhaps you are no lover of music," she said; "or it may be you have sisters who sing far better than I."

"I am, like yourself, alone," said I—"the last of my family; and," I added, "I passionately love music."

Her fingers wandered carelessly over the strings, and she seemed seeking in her mind for a theme of song. Her face was pale, but her eyes shone with a deep, intense light. As I sat there, in that strange dwelling, beholding her so beautiful, yet so mysterious, she seemed to me a sibyl, and not a mere mortal maiden. While I still watched her, half bewildered by my fancies, her fingers swept the strings to more regular measure. Notwithstanding she had desired to change the gloomy theme, the shadow was not yet lifted from her mind. In a clear, but peculiarly mournful voice, she improvised these verses:

"Haunted house, or haunted heart!
Which conceals the deeper smart?
Here are chill and joyless rooms,
Flitting shadows, hovering glooms,
Many a fearful voice and face;
Oh! thou dread and dreary place,
Haunted house, I fly from thee.

Yet the world could ne'er impart
Peace to me, whose haunted heart
Whispered of a promise spoken,
Of a trust which had been broken.
No new faith could give me cheer,
No new promise could be dear;
Haunted house, I cling to thee."

As she finished singing she laid aside her guitar, and, rising, lighted a candle, which she gave to me without speaking. Her lips quivered with suppressed emotion, and her face wore an aspect of patience, long wearied, yet still unbroken. She had seemed a sibyl before; she seemed a martyr now. A martyr to some fierce duty which imprisoned her in this enchanted house, away from the bright world for which her beauty was made.

I took the light, and, with a sober good night, followed the servant, who now appeared, to my sleeping-room. When he had left me, I threw myself on a seat, heedless of all about me. The

song rung in my ears, so wildly mournful and foreboding.

But presently, by an effort, I shook off the spell, and looked about me. The room was an old-fashioned bed-room, on the ground floor, furnished with a high, curtained bed, an ancient bureau, and high-backed chairs. A fire crackled in the fire-place, and relieved the otherwise gloomy chamber. Thoroughly wearied, I quickly threw aside my clothing, and lay down to rest.

I knew not how long I slept, but suddenly, out of a deep sleep, I awoke, perfectly conscious, and, rising in bed, looked about me. The fire had long since gone out on the hearth, and the moon, unclouded, shone through the curtainless window. I felt a sense of oppression, of unaccountable restlessness; it seemed to me utterly impossible to sleep longer in that room. Chilly as the December night was, I longed for a breath of its bracing air, and I dressed myself slowly, standing by the hearth. The words "Haunted house, I fly from thee," kept returning and dwelling on my fancy; and I know not to what state of morbid uneasiness my mind would have progressed, had not a sudden sound, a real excitement, at once dispelled my vapors, and roused me to the full possession of every faculty.

The sound was a footstep, slow, distinct, regular, like the precise and even tread of a night sentinel. By this time I was fully dressed, and I stepped quickly to the window.

Good heaven! was that the spirit, the unquiet spectre of the Grange?

A tall figure, not in "sheeted white," as the frightened villagers had told, but enveloped from head to foot in a cloak of sombre gray, was walking slowly to and fro, not a dozen rods from my window. For some moments I stood perfectly motionless, while the blood ran chill in my veins, until I was convinced that I was not deceived, that something, whether flesh or spirit, was really walking before my eyes; and then, remembering my mysterious summons, I threw up the sash lightly, and leaped to the ground.

As I sprang, the spectre paused and stood perfectly silent, with its face toward me. It was so far off, however, and the moonlight was so indistinct, that I could not see the features, only a pale countenance, dim and shadowy. I started toward it, but, at my approach, the figure lifted one arm and waved me back. At the same time the hand, extended, let fall a slip of white paper, which fell fluttering to the ground, and, still keeping its face toward me, still waving me back, the spectre receded, until it was lost in the thick shadows of the grove.

For a moment I hesitated whether I should not

track the ghost to his hiding-place, but I forbore, and satisfied myself with approaching the spot where he had stood, and seeking for the paper. I found it without trouble, a narrow slip of letter paper, clinging to the frosty ground. With this grasped closely in my hand, I returned, easily re-entered my window, shut it down, and, by the aid of a solitary coal which still gleamed among the ashes, I relit the wax candle which had lighted me to bed.

The paper contained these words, written in the same hand, the same style as my former note.

"Seven years ago, come Christmas Eve, Hugh Dunallen perished, but the hand that slew him forbore to touch his wealth. Vengeance, not avarice, aimed the sure blow. For you, his guiltless heir, it has been safely stored.

"On Christmas Eve, at your peril sooner, follow the river path until you reach three oaks, growing together, near a sudden bend of the stream. There seek and find your inheritance."

I slept no more that night, but paced the room in a tumult of doubts. Was there indeed a murderer concealed within these precincts? and was it for me to seek and to prove the dark crime? Geneva's face, so pure and perfect in its sad loveliness, came before me, and I shrank from the thought of being an avenger, when she, the innocent, must suffer with the evil doer. I resolved to be silent, and to wait until the appointed hour, before concluding my plan of action.

CHAPTER III.

THE sun rose as brightly, and smiled as serenely, the following morning, into the windows of Ware Grange, as if no dark gloom had ever overshadowed it, no secret horror clung about its walls. Not yet recovered from the bewildering vision of the night, I felt eager to see Geneva's face again, to learn if she were indeed more than another and fairer spectre of this house of shadows.

I descended to the room in which she had received me the previous evening, but she was not there. Her guitar, however, was in the spot where she had left it, her sewing lay on the centre-table, and various little tokens of her handiwork gave an added charm to the costly apartment.

In a few moments she appeared and cordially bade me good morning; but, while speaking with me, I perceived that her keen eyes were reading my countenance with a secret anxiety. I endeavored, by the cheerfulness of my manner, to

conceal any traces there might be of my night's broken slumbers. Apparently I succeeded; for she resumed the quiet and easy manner which seemed habitual to her, and, after a few moments of light conversation, she led me to the breakfast-table.

She had looked beautiful and sibyl-like on the previous evening; but this morning, as she presided at the table, she wore a sweet and womanly aspect, even more alluring. She was attired as gracefully as, though more simply than, the night before; and her face, in place of that pallor which alone had marred its beauty, wore a delicate blush that seemed called forth by the novelty of her position as hostess.

While we were lingering at the table, a sudden, confused murmur arose, outside of the apartment, and, in a moment, the door was flung open, and the woman whom I had met on the roadside entered, with her basket of wares hung about her waist. Geneva turned her head as the door opened, but when the wistful face of the stranger met her gaze, she grew instantly pale, and, rising, looked with mingled sternness and terror on the intruder.

The woman's countenance was even more pale and haggard than when I had seen her first, and her fierce, passionate eyes wandered restlessly about, as if seeking something they never could find. She had torn some red berries from the wintry boughs on her way, and had woven for her head a fanciful wreath. As she met Geneva's eye, she smiled vacantly, and pointed to the garland.

"It is almost Christmas time," she said, "and I am beginning to gather my holly and cedar. You know we shall want to deck all these windows with wreaths, and light candles in every room. You may festoon your gay parlor just as you please; but I am come to deck the north chamber—the gloomy north chamber."

Geneva, pale and trembling, could not speak, but motioned with her hand for her to go away. It was very evident that the woman was insane, but this excess of terror, in one so self-reliant as Geneva, startled me.

"My good woman," said I, rising and approaching her, "I think Miss Ware does not care to purchase of you this morning; you will be more likely to succeed at the village."

Her eyes lighted up wildly while I spoke, and throwing aside her basket, she caught my hand. I did not like her grasp, and withdrew it quickly.

"Oh! it is you I am seeking!" she cried. "You have got the diamond—the precious diamond. Give me that and I will go; I will never trouble you again."

"Send her away," said Geneva; "she has been here before, and I dread her."

"No, no. Do not send me!" cried the lunatic. "I did not come for your sake, proud girl; I do not know you; it is him I seek."

"Give it to me! It is my own," she said, imploringly, and, with an expression of keen pain upon her face. "It is my diamond. Should I not know it anywhere? and to think it should come to me here! It is my own; my heart would not ache so, if it were not my own."

I did not know what to say. Her distress moved me, and at the same time Geneva's look of terror made me again approach her and endeavor to persuade her away. She paid no attention whatever to my words, but with her eyes bent on the ring she went on half in soliloquy.

"I was so glad, so happy, when he gave it to me first; he told me then it had a charm, and I did not know what he meant. But when I lost it, then I knew, for all my joy went from me—a demon came to me. But I will take it again and go to him. I will hold it to my lips before his eyes and he will forgive me, and my heart will never ache again, and my brain will never burn. I shall rest—I shall rest."

"I cannot wait," she added, in a sharp, angry tone. "Why do you stand there wondering at me? Give me my ring or I will snatch it from your hand."

I repelled her touch and bade her to be silent.

"Let us have no more of this folly," I said. "Go quietly away, or I shall be forced to send you."

Her face changed almost instantly, and she looked so perfectly sane, so grieved at my harshness, that I drew back involuntarily.

"Do not send me away," she repeated. "Do you not know me? I am Margaret—Margaret," dwelling softly on the name as if it pleased her ear. "He gave me the ring, up in the north chamber, and I, poor, false Margaret, I gave it to you."

"Miss Ware," said I, "it is useless to attempt to reason with this poor woman, for my unlucky diamond has quite bewildered what little sense she had before. Let me lead you to another room, for this excitement is making you ill; and then I will return and show this stranger the path to the village."

Geneva, still agitated, moved to obey my request, but the same instant, the woman, who had watched us keenly, took up her basket and left the room. Geneva hastened to the window, and in a few moments saw her gliding away, down the field path. Relieved of her anxiety, she turned toward me smiling.

"You must be surprised to see me so moved at the sight of a harmless unfortunate," she said, "but I have a peculiar dread of her. By fair means or foul she has obtained a knowledge of our family secrets, which I fear she will use to the ruin of this poor house. Now and then she wanders this way, and I am in constant anxiety until she leaves the neighborhood."

"Something more than simple misfortune has rendered her what she is," I replied. "She meant more than we knew when she called herself false Margaret. But I cannot account for her eagerness to possess this ring."

"The diamond has had a peculiar charm in all eyes," said she, thoughtfully. "Have you not read stories of its supernatural powers? Perhaps the sight of it recalls some superstition of her youth."

We returned to the drawing-room as she spoke, and while Geneva seated herself with her needle-work, I took a book which lay open on the table and read to her. No allusion was made to the incident of the past night, but casting from us all sad and foreboding thoughts, with books, with music, and with conversation the day passed away. That golden day in my memory! It was the sunrise of love—the dawn of a new existence. I forgot the dark mysteries which hung about my companion. I saw only her entrancing beauty, heard only from her lips the echoes of a heart warm, generous and true, a mind noble and exalted. A thrilling ambition took possession of me. I would, when this fatal Christmas was over, go away and plunging into the labor of life, win fame and glory, and then, when success had crowned me, I would return and win her. How could I ever dream away another hour of life! All my past years looked empty and worthless. How little had satisfied my ambition; how little had filled my heart! Fired by this new passion, all life looked larger and nobler to me, and my pulses already throbbed with the sense of strength and of victory.

But the day, bright and enchanting as it was, must have an end. It was already late when I took my lighted candle to retire, yet even then I lingered.

"Give me one more song," I said, "one of more cheerful mood than that of last evening. It rang in my ears all night and gave me strange dreams."

A warm blush overspread her face, but she took the instrument and preluded a few moments in silence. Then she sung, but sweet as her accents were, their undertone of sadness was still the same.

"Joyful morn or peaceful eve,
One alone the fates decree,
Each must have time to grieve,
And a joy for each must be.
Blessed be whose early tears
Sanctify more blissful years.
Youth's sweet flowers may all too soon
Wear the impress of decay
And the glory of the moon
Die in wrathful clouds away,
Morning hours are swiftly past,
Give me only peace at last!"

"And now good night," said she, with a smile, "and may no evil vision disturb your rest."

I did not sleep at once and so deeply as on the previous night, for now that I was alone and away from the fascination of Geneva's presence, my mind was more disturbed by thoughts of what had occurred within the last two days. I half expected to be roused again at dead of night to meet the apparition of the gray cloak. With this expectation, I watched rather than slept, yet so far was I overcome by the unusual excitement, that I lost my consciousness now and then, but was awakened every hour by the regular striking of the great clock in the hall. At midnight I rose and looked out of the window, but all was still, and the placid moonlight rested on the desolate ground. Concluding that the spectre had finally vanished, I returned to my couch and fell into a profound slumber.

I dreamed that it was Christmas Eve, and I was alone, seeking for my treasure, beneath the three tall oaks by the river side. I had cut deeply into the brown turf, and my spade was beginning to strike against something which gave a metallic ring, when a rustle in the bushes caught my ear and almost before I could turn toward it, a serpent sprung from the thicket and stung me on the hand.

With an exclamation of pain I awoke, but was it all a dream? My hand still smarted with the recent pain; I sat up on the bedside and looked about me. The window was wide open, and a piercing wind blew in, scattering my clothing from the chair on which I had thrown it. Again the smarting of my finger drew my attention to it, but—mystery upon mystery—a drop of blood covered a little scratch upon my joint, and the ring, the diamond was gone!

CHAPTER IV.

EARLY as it was when I sought the drawing-room the following morning, Geneva was there before me, gayly decorating the walls and windows with Christmas garlands. In a few words

I told her of the night's disaster. She looked pale and terrified, while her wreaths dropped, unnoticed, to the floor. Deep as was my chagrin at the loss of my diamond, the sight of her sympathy warmed my whole heart with a delicious joy.

"It is—it must be Margaret," she said. "No one else could have dreamed of such an act. There is not a servant in the house whom you might not trust with all your possessions."

"I do not doubt that it is the crazy woman," I returned, "but now is it possible for me to find her? Where are her haunts?"

"I do not know; but the whole neighborhood shall be searched at once. Reuben shall go in one direction—"

"And I in another. I would not willingly lose so valuable a gem, especially when it is all that remains of my family's wealth. I must seek for it thoroughly."

"And I—what can I do?" she said, eagerly. "Can I be of no service?"

I assured her that she could not, and, with as little delay as possible, the two servants and myself hurried away. It was a rough region among these hills, but the old servants were familiar with every covert and glen for miles. With the aid of our horses we searched every recess of the forest, and every nook of the hills, where it was possible that such a wild wanderer would attempt to hide herself. Hour after hour went by, and my anxiety began to merge itself in wonder. We inquired at every dwelling, both in the little village and along the unfrequented roads, but no one had seen her, and at nightfall, weary and disappointed, we turned homeward. The diamond, I felt assured, was irrevocably lost.

My spirits sank as I approached the house. What was it but a haunt of insane spirits, where only one sweet human heart throbbed in loneliness and sorrow!

Geneva did not come to welcome me as I returned, but looking troubled and harassed, she talked earnestly apart with the elder servant. He, too, seemed startled, and, almost without heeding me, they disappeared, hurrying into the house. "What new witchcraft is being wrought out?" I asked myself, easily vexed in my state of weariness and disappointment.

In half an hour I was called to the supper-table, but Geneva was not there, and the meal was lonely and tasteless. But remembering the tour which still lay before me, for it was Christmas Eve, I endeavored to swallow something to sustain my well tried strength. Strange and unaccountable as the whole plan seemed to me,

I was resolved to obey all the directions of the note, and to see if indeed Hugh Dunallen's treasure was buried in the earth, where he had fallen. If I should find such to be the case, then all doubts of his death by foul means would cease; a real meaning would, by necessity, be attached to the ghostly confession, and vague suspicions would give way to the stern and active search of justice.

I had already, tired of waiting for Geneva's reappearance, supplied myself with a lantern, and started to leave the house for my walk to the river, when, as I stood in the door, her dress rustled on the staircase.

"Do not go!" she said, speaking tremulously and with difficulty. "It is too late for our purpose to be thus fulfilled. Come with me."

I obeyed, laying aside quickly my night lantern, and my out-door gear. She reascended the staircase, and I wonderingly followed her. She led the way to a chamber on the north end of the house, somewhat removed from the other apartments by a long passage which seemed to separate it from the main building. At the door she paused, and looked pleadingly at me.

"Whatever you see," she said, "remember that the wrongs of others brought about this ruin, and forgive—for my sake."

I raised her hand to my lips in silence, for her imploring words went to my heart. She opened the door, and I followed her into the chamber.

A bare floor, a hard field bed, scanty furniture, and darkened windows, in strange contrast to the luxuriousness of the lower apartments, met my gaze, and on the bed, with the large, gray cloak thrown carelessly over him, lay a man, whose pallid cheek and glassy eye betokened that death was at hand. He was not an aged man, but some dark and terrible sorrow had made his hair gray. I knew him at a glance as the spectre of the garden.

Geneva went toward him and sat down on the couch by his side. "He is come, father," she whispered, and then her white fingers strayed among his gray locks, and her eyes rested wistfully on his changing countenance.

Rupert Ware, it could be no other, fixed his hollow, gray eyes on me, and beckoned me to a seat at his side. I obeyed, and then with a long, searching gaze he scanned my face.

"Thank God!" he uttered, at last, "there is no look of your kinsman in your face. You are yet unscathed by crime—but he—

"Let me tell you my story, for you are his nephew, and have a right to know the cause of our deadly enmity," he said, directly.

I expressed my anxiety to know all, to have this mystery cleared up, yet warned him not to exert his strength beyond its limits.

"This Grange, now ~~neglected~~," he said, "was once a noble country seat, handed down from father to son, ever since the first Rupert Ware, a solitary, misanthropic man, chose this mountain glen for his homestead. Here, in my youth, I brought my bride, and one more fair never gladdened a bridegroom's heart. I did not shut her up in this lonesome retreat, for having wealth and leisure we traveled from city to city, yearly, sharing in all the gayeties of the world. She was everywhere courted and flattered by the proudest in the land, and I was not afraid. I did not dream of danger. Geneva!"

"Father!"

"Give me wine; I must have strength."

He drank one or two draughts from the cup which she presented, and then with a firmer voice proceeded.

"At a Northern city, on the summer after Geneva was born, we met Dunallen. He was a man of the world, a professed admirer of beauty, and he paid unlimited homage to my wife. I began to see a change in her; she was weary of my society and went more than ever into gay assemblies. Inwardly chiding myself for my suspicion, I yet deemed it wise to return. But I was too late; her heart was already poisoned. We were followed on our journey by Dunallen, but, bold as he was, he dared not come to my house. She seemed happy again, and I thought her safe, but he, serpent like, was lurking in the neighborhood and watching for her whenever she went abroad. At last, one night, I came home to a hearth desolate and disgraced; she had fled with her betrayer."

Again he tasted the wine, but his face was ghastly, his utterance impeded.

"I did not follow them, but I clasped my child to my arms and vowed that sooner or later he should atone to me. I would not seek him then, in the first exultation of his success—my vengeance could wait—wait until he was weary of his ill-got treasure—until, perhaps, he regretted and repented his evil folly—until death by my hand would seem most bitter, most terrible.

"Years passed, and I lived only for my child. My heart grew to her as the one thing left of my happiness; and well has she repaid me.

"But I knew the hour would come, and seven years ago this night, it was at hand.

"Long since he had cast off his miserable victim, and she had gone, I knew not whither, to hide her woe and remorse. He too had

changed and had settled into a grave and sober man—it made my revenge the sweeter.

"Deep was my long silence that I had forgotten or forgave my wrongs, he had the boldness to come again on a tour of some kind, among these hills. I watched for him. As he passed by my gates at nightfall, journeying on horseback, I rode out and took my place at his side. There was no salutation, no need of any words between us, but his face blanched. His steel was as sharp as mine, and we fought hand to hand, but the God of vengeance was on my side and he fell, and where he fell I buried him.

"Nothing now remained but for me to change to gold all the wealth which he carried with him, and to bury that also out of sight, and then I vowed to look no more on human faces. I told my child the fearful tale, and bade her be faithful to me; and then I buried myself and my ruin in this gloomy chamber, never breathing the outer air except in the dead solitude of night. I had yet one interest on earth beside that of my child; I had no desire to rob Dunallen's heir of his just inheritance. For the purpose of restoring your own to you, I ascertained, by means of my faithful Reuben, the time when you would be of age, and on that day I sent my summons to you. It was my plan to fly hence with Geneva, while you were searching in the forest. But it was not so to be. The fearful malady which has consumed my vitals for years past, has been aggravated by the excitement of your coming, and my hours are numbered.

"Geneva has kept my secret—she has been true to me. In one thing only I deceived her—I told her that her mother was dead."

Here Geneva started, and looked with wild amazement in her father's face.

"Not dead!" she uttered. "My mother living?"

"She lives—less wretched than I, for fate has been merciful, and darkened her memory of the past. Margaret! Margaret!"

As he spoke this name in a changed and hollow voice, he raised himself on his elbow, and looked wildly toward the door. Our eyes followed his startled gaze, and I sprung to my feet as I beheld the crazy Margaret.

"Woman, this is the chamber of death!" I cried. "Why are you here?"

She looked toward me, and smiled, and I perceived that her eyes no longer shone with the wild light of insanity; they were mild and tearful. She glided toward the bed, and, sinking down at the sick man's side, she held up to his eyes the diamond ring.

"Rupert," she whispered, "I have found it again—the diamond you gave me on my wedding day. I gave it to him who broke my heart, but God has sent it back to me. Put it upon my finger once more and I shall be forgiven."

His eyes grew fixed and glassy; at the sight of his countenance her anguish became intense.

"Forgive—forgive me!" she cried. "One word, Rupert, before you die."

He reached out his hand, and, taking the ring from her, looked long and sorrowfully in her face, and put it upon her finger.

"Geneva," he said, "forgive your mother!"

The next instant, and before Geneva could reply, his eyes closed—he was dead.

Geneva flung herself upon her father's breast, and gave way to her long restrained tears; but Margaret Ware rose and turned to me.

"May I keep it?" she said. "It was Rupert's gift, and to see it, to hold it even now, has scattered the darkness from my brain. Tell me I may keep it, and I will go in peace."

I should have deemed it sacrilege to take it from her now, and so I told her. She thanked me, and, turning to the bed, pressed a kiss on Geneva's tearful face. Geneva returned the caress, but again shrinking from her, she hid her face on the cold bosom of her dead father. I approached the orphaned girl, and taking her hand tried to lead her away. I called her by tender names, I told her she was not alone, that I was with her, I would be true to her forever.

When at length, soothed and calmed, I led her out of the chamber, her mother was not to be found. She had gone as silently as she had come, and we never saw her more.

I stayed a month longer at the Grange, and as Geneva's betrothed, settled all the neglected affairs of the estate. In the meantime I found the treasure in the exact spot to which I had been directed, and took possession of it, as the rightful heir. This done, I bade farewell to Ware Grange—nor did I go alone. I could not leave Geneva there amid all the gloomy and fearful memories of that haunted house. She went with me as my bride.

We searched vainly for the unfortunate woman whose sin had wrought such direful ruin, but she wandered about no more, and the place of her retreat was securely hidden. Two years after our marriage, a little sealed package was brought to me, one evening, directed to Arthur and Geneva Dunallen. I opened it, and gazing curiously into the little ebony casket, we beheld the diamond ring. There was no word, nor message accompanying it, but we knew that Margaret Ware was at rest.

THE MODERN VESTAL.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

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THE MODERN VESTAL.

BY FRANK LEE BENEDICT.

By way of doing penance for my sins—I can think of no other motive which could have actuated me—I once went to pass a summer in the country in company with a young artist friend of mine.

I had known him for quite a length of time, and had always considered him a "charming fellow." Of course he had the thousand peculiarities which are so thoroughly monopolized by artistic and literary geniuses in general. He would be moody when he ought to have been full of life; irritable, sarcastic, deeply impressed by the idea that he was not properly appreciated; but I never noticed those little foibles—I had lived before in the house with a live genius, and, from my experience in that sort of thing, knew exactly how to pass it by.

So the early summer days came on, and Langley entered my room on the brightest and laziest of mornings, where I sat with a pile of blank paper before me, a pen in my hand, an unopened letter by my side from a certain Magazine publisher, the contents of which I could have deciphered with my eyes closed as easily as Dan Hume, or any other medium or clairvoyant, for everywhere I turned I saw before my eyes, "Late in the month—press waiting!" Bless you, I had already a pile of letters nearly as high as myself, for I am not, I grieve to confess, a tall man, and my good friend, the publisher, might have spared himself the trouble of rewriting the same familiar phrases by just jotting down, "Please refer to my last letter, it will be just as applicable this month as last."

There I sat, biting the feather of my quill, and gazing as anxiously at the window of the opposite house, as if I expected to draw inspiration out of the closed shutters, when our young artist entered in his usual *nonchalant* way, and flung himself in a graceful attitude upon my sofa; trust genius for finding by instinct the easiest seat in the room, it has great capacities in that respect!

I pushed aside my paper, consoling myself for my idleness by thinking it was necessary to be polite, and lent my attention to his detail of grievances. The city was so stupid, so conventional—he must have fresh air and nature, or he should die! The upshot of it was, that

he proposed that I should accompany him on a summer excursion, and I, unsuspecting creature, readily consented.

I finished my article as best I might, packed a few traps into my traveling trunk, and armed with the last new novel and a fishing-rod, was quite ready to start. We had a pleasant trip up the river, sitting upon deck in the moonlight, while my friend raved about the glorious night, and I smoked my meerschaum regardless of the horrified ladies who passed, listening to his fine sentiments, which puzzled me quite as much, coming from him, as they had done when I originally read them in Ruskin. I insisted upon going to bed at last—if getting into one of those animated boxes in the state-rooms can thus be termed—and fell asleep with Langley's ravings about the delights of country life and nature ringing in my ear—dreamed that Ruskin was punching me in the side with his last article, which had assumed the shape of a brass pointed umbrella, and woke to find the artist giving me vigorous thumps in the region of my liver, and shouting that it was daylight, we at Hudson, and only ten minutes in which to reach the railway depot.

I may lay claims to good temper when I say that I rose without grumbling—I, who hate a morning that has the impudence to present itself before ten o'clock, and unaccompanied by hot coffee and buttered rolls! Rise I did, and breakfastless, still in a short space of time we were whirling on as fast as an express train could bear us.

Our destination was a spot I had never visited, only three or four miles from the Shaker village of New Lebanon, at the base of the Berkshire hills, and within an easy walk of Queechy, and other wonders. Even to the eyes of a hungry man it was a pleasant sight! An old farm house surrounded by great trees, overgrown with vines, and not another dwelling near!

Not a female to be seen but the farmer's sensible wife—no delicate ladies to be cared for, no quoting of poetry, no love-making, no petitioning for album verses! I fairly shouted with delight. Here one might wear a blue shirt in freedom, go unshaven, and smoke a short pipe unmolested—it appeared to me a new Utopia.

After breakfast we sallied out. A few moments

walk through the fields brought us to the borders of a small lake, partially surrounded by mountains, and altogether the loveliest spot one can well imagine.

That day was given to delightful indolence. We sat under the trees, took little voyages in the sail boat, hunted for flowers, and passed a truly happy morning. I went to bed at night equally pleased with my friend, the good wife's biscuits, and the world in general.

Before I fell asleep, my conscience reproached me that I had ever allowed myself to think Langley had any of the faults, such as selfishness or egotism, with which I had occasionally reproached him.

The next day was equally bright, and passed off tolerably well. I went out with him while he sketched, and as it happened to be in the woods, sketching in the open air struck me as a very pleasant occupation. But the next, and the next, and the next! Oh! shade of Lorraine, Turner, or whoever you please, I shudder as I recall that time!

The demon took full possession of Langley's soul—yes, I assert it, nothing else could account for that man's vagaries and enormities. He dragged me out of bed by daylight—he insisted on my climbing hills to see the sun rise—he forced me to accompany him on walks of several miles to his sketching places—he gave me the heaviest of his traps to carry, on the plea that their weight made his hand shaky—he trotted me about, dragged me up and down, till I looked like the ghost of myself, and had not even the energy left to expostulate.

He would be seized with a desire to draw pitcher plants, or some other diabolical things that grew in the swamp; up to my knees in the mud must I follow to watch his operations, and praise every stroke of his brush. Language is weak to express what I suffered!

I have sat for hours perched like a partridge on the top of a rail fence—I have gronned for half a day in a wheat field exposed to a July sun—I have crouched on the lake shore and held the boat still by main force, while he sat in it and worked away at an old gray rock—I have stood for every figure imaginable, biped or quadruped, erect or on all fours, that was required in his middle distances, and all without a murmur. It never occurred to Langley that I could be tired—never entered his mind that I might prefer some other amusement to that of being useful.

Nor with it all is any one to suppose that he was more amiable than the children of genius are wont to be. Every misfortune was my fault;

I was blamed for the heat of the day; or if it rained, I was fretted at as if my prayers had brought it down. As he was still a young artist, his sketches often did not meet his expectations, then he would indignantly tear them up, and in less than five minutes, by some ingenious theory, show that it was not owing to his want of practice, but to my stubbornness, ignorance, or the like.

I bore this for three weeks. Will my worst enemy ever again call me unamiable? I humored that young wretch in everything, almost forgot that I had a will or a wish of my own.

On the third Saturday I went to bed with an excruciating headache, the like of which only a nervous person can comprehend. Some innocent people may suppose that my young artist stayed at home with me. He did, just long enough to tell me that people who fell sick in the country ought to be gibbeted, that it was nothing but pure willfulness, and so on. I think I should have seriously injured the physiognomy of genius had he remained much longer; but having delivered those delectable opinions he flounced out of the room, and I had a day of delicious quiet.

The early tea was over, and I, feeling much relieved, was seated by the open window smoking my pipe and inhaling the fragrance of the clambering roses, when Langley returned.

I saw that he was in a state of great excitement; he could settle down to nothing; the sketch he had taken with him was not a quarter finished, and it was quite evident that something out of the common order of things had happened. I saw that he wished me to ask what was the matter, and I consequently held my tongue; it is a rule of mine never to gratify that amiable weakness in anybody.

"Such a day as this has been," he burst out at length, unable longer to keep silence.

"A very pleasant one to me," I replied, quietly; "I find that I am charming society for myself, and don't make constant demands either on body or mind."

"Now you are going to be sneering and sarcastic!" he exclaimed. "You are the most unsympathetic fellow in existence."

"How so?" I asked.

"Why here I come home with my head and heart full, anxious for some one with whom I can talk freely, and—"

"I won't even ask you what the matter is! My dear fellow, I knew that it was quite unnecessary; I am acquainted with the idiosyncrasies of genius—you couldn't keep it to yourself if you would."

. Langley frowned and parted his moustache; but as I only laughed and insisted on keeping my temper—the most irritating thing in the world to an angry man—my excitable painter was forced to recover his good nature.

"Now, do be a nice fellow," he said, coaxingly. "I met with the prettiest little romance to-day—I can tell you about it, though I wouldn't any one else."

Now I am only human—true, I may possess sundry little perfections—but I am human still, and I do love a little romance or a bit of gossip! I softened gradually into a state of serenity, and after a little smoothing of his ruffled plumage, my companion grew quite amiable and confiding.

"When I went out this morning, I meant to have a good day's sketching, but somehow I dawdled away all the forenoon in the woods above the Shaker houses, and hardly got my sketch drawn in.

"In the afternoon several of the Shaker girls, guarded by one or two of the old mother dragons, came up into the field after strawberries. I was lying behind a fallen tree where they could not see me, and I remained quite still watching them. How they did chatter! I believe if you made a woman pass her life shut up in a bandbox, she would find something to talk about! There was one little thing I couldn't help but notice—as graceful as a fairy even in that ugly dress, and her face looked all the prettier from its contrast with that diabolical bonnet.

"I must have lain there for an hour, and was just thinking about jumping up suddenly to see them scamper like so many quails, when the pretty girl wandered off by herself, and sat down quite near me. She looked so pale and sad, it was really pitiful. The rest gradually picked their way down hill, until a little hollow at the foot hid them from our view as effectually as it concealed us from them.

"My little Shakeress gave a weary sort of sigh, and rose to follow the others, when a clump of wild roses, growing very near me in the edge of the woods, attracted her attention. She set her basket down, and ran to pick them; but, just as she passed my hiding-place, her foot slipped, and she fell heavily against a log. I sprang toward her, and raised her up. She was quite stunned for a few moments, but I carried her to the spring close by, sprinkled water in her face, and, when she recovered her senses, she found herself half lying on the grass, with her head on my shoulder.

"Such a little strangled shriek as she gave! But I explained it all to her, and, like a sensible girl, she thanked me warmly, although she was

trembling from head to foot with excitement and fright. I made her sit down until she was wholly recovered, and, as I flattered myself that I am not a very terrible object, she soon forgot her alarm, and we conversed quite freely.

"The dearest, sweetest little thing! She is only seventeen; she has been with the Shakers four years—an old gorgon of an aunt, to whose care she was left, joined the society, and brought her there. The old hyena is dead, and poor Lucy!—that is her name—is wretched enough.

"I can't tell you how I found it all out—she is the most modest thing, but so frank and innocent! I swear to you I would have carried her off by main force, then and there, and trusted to her loving me afterward, but, just at that moment, the wretches below set up a howl after her, and she had to run."

I listened in perfect silence, and even after he had done made no remark.

"Wasn't it strange? Did you ever hear anything more romantic? What do you think of it?"

"I think we will leave this place to-morrow."

"The deuce we will! Why I want you to go to the meeting and see her, and next Monday they are going strawberrying in the same place."

"What is that to you? What right have you amusing yourself at that poor girl's expense, exposing her to the anger of the society, and making her in every way wretched?"

"I am not a brute, sir! I love that girl, and I mean to marry her. She will be just the wife for me—all nature—not like the girls you have flirted with for the last ten years, bepainted and bewittered till they are as hideous as hot-house plants."

I gave a prolonged whistle, but was soon obliged to confess that Langley was quite in earnest. I knew what an impulsive young wretch he was, and only wondered that he did not carry the young girl away before the very eyes of all the elders in the settlement.

"Now will you stay and help me?" he asked, after half an hour's insane recitation of the girl's perfections. "Are you my friend or not? This is the time to prove it. Go, if you choose, but here I stay till Lucy consents to fly with me."

I knew that it was entirely useless to oppose him, and I promised to go next day to the meeting. The truth was, I loved the young reprobate much better than he deserved, and would not for the world have left him at such a time.

All night he could neither rest nor let me, and the next morning he was quite insane, until we

were safely ensconced in the farmer's old wagon, and driving toward the village as rapidly as the stiff-kneed plough horse could carry us.

Everybody who has visited New Lebanon must remember the two rows of ugly dwellings, and the great yellow meeting-house at the foot of the hill. There were not many visitors at the springs that summer, so there were but few strangers present in the church.

It always had a singular effect upon me, that cold, dreary building, with the men and women seated in motionless rows at either end. The brethren were in general repulsive-looking enough; but many of the younger women had singularly interesting faces, and, sitting there with their shroud-like gowns, they reminded me of so many sepulchral images.

The early part of the services was tame enough; sermons and exhortations from several of the elders, a hymn or two; then all rose simultaneously, the seats were moved back, and the dancing began.

Langley was busy looking about for his new charmer, so I sat for some time watching them in silence. A little knot of men and women gathered in a circle, and began a dreary chant; then the brethren, in procession, two by two, started around the building in a sort of serpentine march, followed by the women. To me there was nothing ludicrous in it; I felt as if I were watching a procession of the dead; their eyes were blanks; they seemed to see nothing; their movements were so measured and mechanical that I shuddered. I felt as if they were tired ghosts doomed to march on thus through all eternity without cessation or repose.

Suddenly Langley clutched my arm. An elderly woman and a young girl were passing. The girl was nearest us, and her eyes fell upon Langley; a vivid flush mantled over the pallor of her face: it was the first touch of humanity I had seen in any of the countenances.

She was really very lovely, even in the close muslin cap, and her movements were singularly graceful. I did not wonder at Langley's infatuation, and it was dreadful to think of her wearing out her beautiful girlhood, and going on toward old age in that monotonous, soulless life.

After that first involuntary glance the girl never raised her eyes toward the spot where we were seated, although Langley insisted upon remaining until the meeting broke up, in the hope of receiving some other mark of recognition.

I tried, on the way home, to argue with him,

but found, as anybody will who tries, the uselessness of attempting to convince a man in love. He would hear neither reason nor persuasion, and I sagely concluded that my interference would only make matters worse.

The next morning he idled about the house until after our primitive dinner hour, then quietly took his departure without so much as hinting that my company would be desirable. I was rather grateful than otherwise, for it gave me a few quiet hours over a favorite novel.

He was back before sunset, more wild and excited than before.

"I have seen her!" was his first exclamation. "I have told her everything. Oh! you can form no idea of the treasure I have found. She will not meet me again alone. It seems her old frump of an aunt told her all sorts of horrible stories about the world in general, and young men in particular; before she saw me she really thought they were a set of roaring lions going about to see whom they may devour."

"She certainly has fallen in with a wonderfully favorable specimen."

"That isn't your affair! Now will you prove yourself my friend?—will you help me?"

"First answer two questions."

"Questions to a man in my state of mind!"

"Do you mean to marry this girl at once?"

"The very moment she will run away with me."

"Do you believe that you love her well enough to make her happy?"

"I know that I do! You may laugh at the suddenness of my passion, but there is a fate in it."

"Ta, ta! You needn't do the transcendental to me! If you choose to be a fool you are accountable to nobody! I do think the girl a thousand times too good for you, and if you treat her badly I give you my word I'll blow your brains out."

"You have my leave! But now listen! You have promised to help me—there is just one way: Lucy can't get out alone, moreover she wouldn't come; but there is a woman she can trust—an old maid, as silly as any you ever met elsewhere. Now sister Margaret forsook the world in disgust, because nobody would marry her, but since she became a Shaker she is haunted with the idea that somebody will come along and fall in love with her."

"The unworthy old vestal! But what of that?"

"You must go with me into the woods tomorrow; Lucy will bring her there, and you must do the fascinating to her, while I talk to my little girl."

"I make love to an old maid? I'll see you shot first!"

"Oh! yes, you will! The best of it is, that sister Margaret noticed you yesterday—she was dancing with Lucy; she thought you were staring at her, and really believes you are the long expected man."

"What! that tall, long thing? Why she has lost her two front teeth."

"Of course she has, but it isn't in the bargain that you are to kiss her."

"I can't do it, Phil! I've been a martyr to my friends all my life, but that is too much."

"Then you will ruin my happiness," he cried, rushing off into a spasm of high tragedy at once.

"If you do, I swear I'll shoot myself."

The consequence was, that I gave way, and we spent the evening arranging how the matter was to be carried on, though I shuddered inwardly whenever the cadaverous face of that venerable spinster presented itself to my mind.

Still a change from the laborious duties of the past fortnight would be pleasant, and there was something romantic in the idea of helping to run away with a young Shakeress, so, finding that opposition was useless, I wisely held my peace.

The next morning, we took our way to the Shaker woods, and seated ourselves where Langley had first met Lucy Moulton. We had, each of us, a sketch book, by way of giving a natural look to our presence; besides, mine was to serve another purpose. I possessed some little skill in drawing faces, and I thought that to commence a flattered water-color sketch of the antiquated maiden's features might materially assist our design.

It was not long before we saw Lucy and sister Margaret coming up the hill-side, with their baskets for gathering strawberries on their arms. We knew that the girl would lead her companion toward the place where we were sitting, and, once discovered, it would be my duty to exert all my powers of fascination, in order to detain the old maid.

It was not long before they approached our lair; sister Margaret noticed the flowers, and pointed them out to the artful little gipsy, who instantly proposed gathering them. They had reached the rose bush before the spinster perceived us.

"Two men!" she exclaimed; "thee must come with me, Lucy—come quick."

"I have hurt my foot!" pleaded Lucy, sinking down on a log.

Of course we both ran toward them, but the younger found time to whisper,

"Good gracious! Margaret, it's the very man that was at meeting on Sunday."

The old maid was in a tremor of agitation and surprise. She evidently felt it her duty to run away, and yet destiny seemed to bid her remain where she was. The influence of the teachings and spiritual manifestations of mother Ann Lee, was not strong enough to hold its ground against the natural weakness of the sex. The Shaker virgin wavered, consequently she was lost, and the upshot of the matter was, that, in spite of her little cries and expostulations with Lucy, she remained, and in an incredibly short space of time was conversing as amiably as possible with me.

She still kept a watchful eye on Lucy. Having been guilty of a weakness herself, was no reason why she should tolerate the least approach to one in her young sister. It was necessary that I should engage her whole attention, if Langley was to obtain any opportunity to induce Lucy to forsake her present home, and follow his fortunes through the world.

I showed sister Margaret my sketch-book, and even hinted that I should like a sketch of a female in the Shaker costume.

"Such things were only vanity," she said, but I took my pencil and began drawing the outlines of her face, and in a few moments she became so much interested in the undertaking, that she was induced to sit down and let me make a sketch. I placed her with her back to Lucy and Langley, bade her not move an inch, or she would ruin the portrait, and began.

To do the old maid justice she sat there like a statue—she must have quite forgotten her young charge. The amount of nonsense I poured into that female's ears was really startling! I came to one conclusion, that a Shaker dress cannot change a woman's nature.

I sacrificed myself heroically on the altar of friendship, and fully performed my part. If the antique damsel had ever read novels, she must have taken me for a Grandisonian hero just stepped out from between muslin covers.

But there is no necessity for exposing myself to the imputation of vanity; it is enough to say that it was Lucy herself who had at length to propose, and even insist upon going, for it was late.

Sister Margaret received her solicitations quite fretfully, but there was no help for it, go they must. It was arranged that they should return the next afternoon, if possible for them to get away unobserved. I did not see Langley's parting with Lucy, but I am bound to say that the old maid was only decorously tender.

When they were half way down the hill, she turned back and waved her handkerchief, a large flowered, cotton affair, that fluttered like a banner in the wind. Of course I returned her parting salutation, and the spinster passed slowly on.

"You have made a decided conquest," Langley said, laughing.

"Hold your tongue!" I cried, furiously. "How much longer do you expect this nonsense to go on? I will not come again, I warn you of that."

"Oh! but you promised! Lucy says she hasn't yet made up her mind to desert the Shakers. I believe on my soul, the little witch wants to prolong affairs, to have the fun of watching you and your venerable Dido."

"Dido be hanged!"

"Now don't be cruel! Show me the sketch you have begun of the sweet creature."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," I retorted, "both you and that artful little Lucy of yours! I hope to goodness we shall be found out—I would willingly take a good cudgeling from the elders, for the sake of seeing you and the girl properly punished."

Of course my hero was in a violent passion immediately. This was the friendship I had vowed for him—he saw now the sincerity of all that I had said! There was no such thing as truth in the world, except, of course, in his own immaculate bosom and that of his inamorata. I was glad to purchase quiet by any promise—I would do anything for peace always. Master Philip was quite aware of my weakness.

The next day the two Shakeresses did not keep their appointment, they had been unable to frame an excuse for leaving the house. Langley was in a terrible way; he would rush at once into the houses and carry Lucy off by main force—there was no project too ridiculous for him to contemplate. I only succeeded in quieting him by making him see that this restraint rather favored his cause than otherwise: the restraint placed upon the girl would disgust her with the Shakers sooner than anything else, now that she had a reason for desiring a little freedom.

However, the day after, the two came up the hill, and I spent several hours again in the society of sister Margaret. The portrait got on but slowly—she insisted upon talking and being talked to. She told me that she detested the Shakers—she had joined them because the world looked cold and dark to her—if she could only find a congenial soul she would desert them at once.

She waited for an answer! Of course there was nothing for it but to say that I had just that sort of soul exactly. Sister Margaret cast down her eyes and blushed under her Shaker bonnet.

There is nothing so enrages a man as being forced to do the sentimental and affectionate to the wrong person. I solemnly vow that my fingers quivered with eagerness to meet about the old maid's shining throat—I could have choked her black in the face with the greatest satisfaction.

Her back was toward the other pair, but every now and then I could see Lucy's eyes wandering toward us, and then she would go off in perfect convulsions of repressed merriment. I doubt if Langley half liked it, but Shakeress or not, the girl was a mischievous witch, and where she learned her thousand coquettish ways was a miracle to me. Learned, did I say? I beg pardon of the sex in general, as if they were ever forced to take lessons in the art of tormenting men:

So matters went on for another fortnight, and it became necessary to take a decisive step. Lucy had a suspicion that they were watched, although she wisely did not communicate her fears to the spinster.

Lucy had promised to forsake her present home and become Langley's wife. Of course sister Margaret was not at all aware of the length to which matters had gone between the two, and how we were to rid ourselves of her at the final moment, was now the question.

As might be expected, I was compelled to sacrifice myself to the end. A carriage was necessary to be in waiting to carry us to the railway depot. The nearest place where we could obtain one was four miles off; and one rainy day I was forced to walk the whole distance in order to procure the requisite conveyance.

Langley was quite beside himself with contending emotions; but for my own part, I could take no share in his happiness, being fully occupied with wondering what was to become of me if sister Margaret were to make her appearance. By this time I knew Master Philip well enough to be quite certain that, at the first cause for alarm, he would make off with his prize, and leave me to encounter every elder in the settlement; and worse, the infuriated old maid, without hesitation.

Everything was at last arranged, and the day arrived. We were to meet Lucy on the hill, beyond the Shaker village, about dusk. She had by some means procured for herself a dress of

modern fashion, which she was to conceal as best she could under her usual attire; and Langley had purchased a hat and shawl which were put in the carriage.

The time was at hand; the carriage came to the farm house, where we had given a proper coloring to our departure, our luggage having been sent on to Hudson the day before.

We drove away to the meeting-place, taking a longer road in order not to pass through the village. Of course we arrived half an hour too early; Langley had been in such a fever for fear we should reach the spot after the time appointed, that he would not hear of waiting another instant.

It was not quite dusk, but Philip was disturbed because Lucy had not arrived. Half an hour passed, but still she did not come. The brightness of the sunset faded; there was no moon, and it would soon be quite dark. I began to fear myself that something had happened, and poor Langley was frantic. I had actually to hold him in order to keep him from dashing off in search of her.

Luckily, when his fever was at its height, we saw Lucy rushing breathlessly toward us. She had stopped long enough to throw aside her Shaker skirt and mantle, and looked pretty as a picture in her simple muslin dress, with her soft, golden hair no longer hidden by the close cap.

Langley caught her in his arms with a burst of passion, but she was too much terrified to heed his words.

"Quick, quick!" she gasped. "Somebody is after me, I know—I think it was Margaret. She will raise the village, and they will murder me."

"We are armed," cried Langley, exultingly; "let them come on."

All that was vastly fine and proper for a man in love, but I thought of the frenzied vestal and shuddered. I might stand my own against the elders, but I confess that it required more courage than I possessed to confront my fair Ariadne.

I shouted to the coachman, and would have had all ready in an instant, but Langley must needs wait to throw the shawl over Lucy's shoulders, and put the coquettish little bonnet on her head, all the while breaking forth in delightful ravings that maddened me.

"Confound your nonsense!" I cried, savagely. "If you don't get into the carriage I'll leave you here."

It was too late! There was a rush through the underbrush—a cry such as I fancy a tigress

might utter when pouncing upon her prey, and sister Margaret rushed into my arms.

"They are all coming," shrieked Lucy. "We are lost."

"Perfidious man!" groaned the spinster, tearing at my neckcloth. "Wretch, you shall not leave me, I will go!"

"Throw her into the brook," said Langley. "Come, Lucy, into the carriage with you—quick! She will rouse all Lebanon."

He was about to do what I had anticipated—leave me to my fate—but sister Margaret was prepared to prove a Nemesis to the whole party.

She flew upon Lucy and seized her in both lean arms, while the poor girl almost fainted with terror.

"She shan't go if I don't!" yelled Ariadne. "I am not going to be left—oh! you abominable wretches—you wicked girl—you horrid men!"

Langley stamped and raved, Lucy was fainting, and I powerless between fear and laughter. The coachman came to our aid in the most unexpected manner. Without a word he sprang off his seat, took a halter from the box, slipped it about the old maid's arms and tied her fast to a tree. The movement was so sudden, that before she realized anything she was safely secured, and for a moment rage kept her silent; then she gave vent to a yell that a Mohawk chieftain might have envied.

It was answered from the woods, and a fat, wheezing elder plunged into our midst.

"The Philistines are in our camp!" he snuffled, seizing Langley's arm. "Release that maiden!"

Langley pushed him on to the ground, while Margaret screamed at the top of her voice,

"Raise the alarm—they are running off with Lucy! Kill them—stop them—don't let them go."

"Yea, verily," groaned the elder, "I suspected the maiden, but there is no help near."

"Ain't you man enough to tackle them?" shouted the old maid. "I'd like to tear your eyes out."

"Knock him down again," said Langley, when the elder tried to rise; "Lucy is almost dead."

"There's no danger now," I cried, "Ariadne is bound! Here, John, bring a rope and help me."

My spirits had risen, the whole thing was so ludicrous; and I left Langley to bring Lucy to, while I took a little revenge for all that I had endured during the past two weeks.

The coachman and I sprang upon the elder, before he could rise, and fastened him securely.

"Now tie him to the other side of the tree, where the woman is," was my order.

"No! no!" groaned the elder. "Our characters will be ruined! Let me go!"

"Oh! if I could murder you all!" screamed Margaret.

But, in spite of their cries and expostulations, we bound the elder to the same tree; I took a large card from my pocket, wrote on it "Stray lambs from the fold," and fastened it above their heads.

Lucy and her lover were already in the carriage, I sprang in after, and the coachman made the horses fairly fly on the road toward the depot.

The last sounds I heard were sister Margaret's imprecations, and the elder's groans.

We reached the station just in time for the train, and, two hours after, were at Hudson. Before midnight Langley and Lucy were husband and wife.

The next morning, I started for town, quite satisfied with my country experience, and having registered a solemn vow never again to venture on a summer tour with an artist.

What became of sister Margaret and the elder I never inquired, nor have I since visited New Lebanon. I did hear that there was a great

excitement in the society, but whether it was owing to Lucy's disappearance, or the melancholy adventure of the twain deserted in the woods, I am unable to say.

Mr. and Mrs. Langley went South for a year, and made themselves happy in their own way. Philip procured all sorts of masters for his wife, and, as the little thing was in truth a very superior woman, she improved so much, that, what with the difference in dress and manners, I did not recognize her when we met.

All these things happened five years since. At present the pair get on as all other married people do—happy, of course—but very different persons to the lovers I helped to run away from the elder's clutches.

Human nature is the same the world over, so nobody will be surprised to hear that Mrs. Langley hates me like poison, because I am acquainted with her past history, and that her charming husband shares in the aversion.

Of course that is nothing to me; I do not intrude myself upon them, but we occasionally meet in society, and when she overwhelms with her gracious courtesy and woman-of-the-world manner, I wonder if it is possible that she can be the little girl I saw dancing in the Shaker meeting-house, ages ago.

THE RULING PASSION.: CHAPTER I.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

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THE RULING PASSION.

BY MRS. ANN S. STEPHENS.

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CHAPTER I.

More than eighty years ago, what is now the city of Norwich, was a thriving village scattered over one of the most picturesque hills in the world, with its wildness and its beauty forming a picture one might well go back a century or so to look at, for civilization is most lovely when it improves nature without enslaving and plundering it. Thus the picturesque log-cabins, and the aspiring frame houses on their natural terraces overlooking each other—some peeping out upon untamed rocks, others embowered in trees, and all wildly irregular—were a thousand times more attractive than the perfect cultivation and stately wealth of the present city, which is even now among the most beautiful in our country.

There was not much inland navigation in those days, but now and then a sloop spread its white sails on the Thames below the village; while canoes and rude boats were abundant on the Yantic and the Shetucket. Along the rich valley which lies on the north-west, farms were scattered, and to a considerable extent the wilderness was cut away. The dwellings, so far as the land presented, were gathered in close neighborhood, out of which first a scattering village, and now a town has sprung. But the cove, which sets up to the mouth of the Yantic, was surrounded by one unbroken mass of trees; here and there the blue smoke curled up from some newly built cabin; and the Yantic river, which plunges its wild body of waters into the head of the cove, through rocks, over precipices, and down chasms, foaming and rioting with eager haste to overtake and outleap the Thetucket in a race for the sea, had been forced to yield some of its laughing waters for the use of a grist-mill, with its slow stones that moaned over their task of a few bushels each day; and below this a saw-mill sent its hoarse music into the dash of the waters, which leaped by, shouting back a mellow defiance, that rang through the old forest trees day and night.

Two log-cabins stood back in the woods. To one the miller took his toll at night: and the other was inhabited by the man that attended the saw-mill. In those days, when two log-cabins stood within sight of each other, they

were likely to constitute a village and receive a name; but with a grist-mill and saw-mill within hearing, of course this was imperative; so the miller and his neighbor held a town meeting between themselves and baptized the beautiful spot Yanticville, and so it stands to this day.

Down among the farm houses, on the plain, stands to this day a large frame house, with a broad gambrel roof and heavy chimneys. Two or three old trees stand around it, and a substantial fence, half stone, and completed with rails, encloses it from the highway. Even now the house possesses that air of substantial comfort, which is the characteristic of almost all Connecticut dwellings; but in the last century it was a very superior building indeed, and bespoke the growing prosperity which had followed the Norwich settlement from its foundation. The ambition of every farmer and housewife, in those days, was to convert his log-cabin into a stable, and overtop it with a frame house. Sometimes it was years before this house received its entire finish, but stood an imposing shell, with a network of lath on the walls waiting for plaster, and no room but the kitchen thoroughly made comfortable.

This house was no exception to the general rule, the hoarded savings that had erected it gave up when the exterior was completed, and for years the good couple lived in a single room and bed-room in winter, contenting themselves with a broader range of fine airy room from spring to autumn, when the unfinished state was rather an advantage than otherwise. They had a growing family, and so put off finishing the house till gray hairs came thick on their temples, and the only son had gone forth into the world to get his own living. There had for three months been great confusion in this house, the sound of hammers, the grating of trowels; then the low, soft sweep of white-wash brushes completing everything almost thirty years after its foundations were laid, and Mr. Arnold's house had received its finishing touches.

And why was all this haste after such patient waiting? Why was the good housewife so busy upon her knees, nailing down home-made carpets, and rolling up paper window blinds at the windows? Why was that fair young girl, with

meek, brown eyes, so earnest in her attendance on the mother, holding the little plate of carpet tacks, and helping with her pretty brown hands to stretch the stubborn fabric to its place?

Why it was the day but one before Thanksgiving, and then all those members of the family who had wandered beyond that valley were to meet again under the gambrel roof and have a grand holiday. That only son, of whom the mother was so proud, cousins from neighboring settlements, and a guest or two of foreign blood, who, fond of adventure, had come to see the grandeur of that New World, which was soon to claim a place among nations—all these were expected at the homestead.

The carpet was down in the south room, and the green and red stripes shone out splendidly. Many a long month had Mrs. Arnold and her daughter toiled at the great wheel, the dye-tub, and the loom before the admired fabric was completed, and they both felt all the sweet consciousness of creation to its full extent. Tall, wooden chairs, with backs bent inward like a bow, and divided longitudinally with small, round bars, and the seats curved like a scroll, stood primly against the white wall; a looking-glass with a fan-like ornament of carved mahogany on each end of the frame, and surmounted at the top with a gilt eagle gleaming grandly between the two front windows; a long mahogany table, bright as the mirror, stood under it with claw feet grasping a ball, and long, deep leaves rounded down to the floor. Opposite this was a high "chest o' drawers," each drawer bulging out, and sinking in like a scroll with picturesque brass handles shining brightly up and down the front, which reached from the floor to the ceiling, where it ended in an elaborately carved shell, a wondrous work of art, for which, as a piece of worldly vanity, Mrs. Arnold wished to be forgiven in her prayers, but still regarded with complacency when she observed its effect on the best room.

"There now, I think everything is in order here," said Mrs. Arnold, dropping the linsey-woolsey apron with which she had been polishing the table. "They might come to-day for anything we should care. Dear me, there is a spot on the andirons," and down she went upon her knees, rubbing the tall, brass andiron with both hands, till drops of perspiration hung on her forehead.

"No, no, that is a bruise, it will never come out," said Hannah; "don't you remember, marm, when brother made it, throwing his hammer, one day, when he hurt his fingers cracking walnuts?"

Mrs. Arnold stopped, gazed down upon the dent a moment with gentle thoughtfulness, and arose from her knees.

"Yes," she said, with a gentle sigh, "I haven't forgotten it, Hannah. Your father and I have often made it a subject of prayer; and it has set on my conscience, more than once, that we ought to have punished him at the time, as the Scriptures point out, but, somehow, whipping never seemed the thing for your brother. It always made him fierce and sullen; and I don't know as any punishment besides the rod is held proper for a child. One hardly knows what way to turn with a boy like that."

"He is so brave, so handsome, mother," said Hannah Arnold, "I don't wonder you couldn't find the heart to punish him. It seems like whipping a race horse for wanting to run ahead. Won't he be delighted when he sees what we've been about here?"

Mrs. Arnold looked around, with gentle complacency, upon her pale, sweet face.

"It is real nice," she said. "The roses on the curtains make the room look bright as a flower garden. Come now, daughter, let's go and see to the beds. Bring down the new coverlet with blue and white orange quarters for the out room, and then we'll go into the kitchen and see how Dan and Hagar are getting along. It'll be time for your father to kill the turkeys and chickens pretty soon; it won't do to have the noise about when the company comes. Get the coverlet, Hannah, and then go tell your par, or they will catch us nicely."

Hannah ran up stairs, opened a huge chest, full of home-spun linen and substantial bedding, from which she took the coverlet woven in orange quarters, and came down again.

"Mother," she said, making herself very busy spreading the coverlet under the snowy pillows, while her cheeks blushed like moss roses, "mother, if it should snow to-morrow—it looks like it, I think—and Mr. Trousa, the French gentleman who is coming with brother, should fancy a sleigh-ride, what do you think of it?"

"A sleigh-ride on Thanksgiving day!" exclaimed Mrs. Arnold, a little horrified.

The roses flushed deeper in Hannah Arnold's cheek, and she cast a little deprecating look at her mother, that melted all the prejudices down in that gentle heart in an instant.

"Well, Hannah, I don't quite see my way about the sleigh-ride, if it should snow, and it seems to me I saw flakes in the air a little while ago; but supposing you mention the matter to par; if he doesn't take it too hard, I won't interfere. You can wear my muff and tippet."

"I didn't mean myself, mother; but the young French gentleman and his sister. You will want me to help about the dinner."

"Never mind about the dinner. I'm capable of managing that with Hagar: we can chop the stuffing and strain the pumkin sauce over night, you know. There now, I don't believe there's a bit of sage or summer savory in the house. What shall we do? These workmen turn everything topsy turvy."

"Oh! yes, there is, mother. I put up two new bundles myself, and hung them on the rafters in the garret, out of the joiner's way. Shall I run and get it?"

"Well, if you'd just as lief as not."

Away went Hannah up into the garret, where any quantity of dried herbs hung in clusters and bundles along the naked rafters, with strings of fresh apples, nicely quartered, and hung up to dry side by side with loops and rings of pumpkins, stretched along poles, and forming massive golden chains across the slope of the roof. On a tow sheet, stretched along one end of the garret floor, which was of loose boards, that rattled as she walked, lay a huge pile of butternuts. Three or four bushels of chestnuts lay in one corner, and a quantity of shag-barks was heaped away farther out of sight.

"There'll be enough for one Thanksgiving, any way," thought Hannah, looking around, as she jumped down from the old chair on which she had mounted in order to reach the herbs. "Brother needn't be afraid of our starving his friends out, any way."

She ran down, with a bunch of herbs in each hand, flushed and pleased that she had remembered something which her mother deemed important.

By this time Mrs. Arnold was in the kitchen, settling the programme of the coming supper, and the next day's feast, with Hagar, the household slave; who was, in reality, rather more mistress of the kitchen than Mrs. Arnold herself.

"Now, Hagar, don't you think we can get along without Hannah to-morrow?"

Hagar laid down the loaf of bread she was cutting, and seemed cloudily doubtful.

"Young folks will be young folks," said the mistress, persuasively.

"Sure enough; there is nature in that 'ar."

Here Hannah entered. Hagar's face brightened at the sight of the herbs. She received them with great complacency, observing that she had just been a-worrying the soul out of her body about sage, and there it came, just like a miracle with an angel behind it.

"Hannah has been very thoughtful," said the mother.

"Yes, and as you was a saying, Miss Arnold, young folks will be young folks, and sleighing is sleighing; that's what I told Dan, not ten minutes ago. 'Dan,' says I, 'you jist go inter the barn, and dust out that 'ere two-horse sleigh, and the cutter as well, for if there isn't two foot of snow to-morrow morning, I ain't a colored person to be 'pended on.' So in course Dan went. Get along without Hannah! Who thought we couldn't, I'd like to know?"

"But what will Mr. Arnold say to all this?" inquired the mistress, doubtfully.

"He—he told me to ask you," said Hannah, with a demure little smile.

Mrs. Arnold did not smile in return; but a look of pleasure stole over her face.

"Well," she said, "we will think about it! Thanksgivin' isn't exactly like Sunday, being rather an institution of the government: so perhaps if we read a chapter, and have prayers at home, and especially if your father and I go to meeting with a sense of edification, a decorous sleigh-ride would not be wrong. Hagar, I think Dan had better bring out the great bear-skin robes, and we must see about the foot stoves."

"I've 'tended to that," said Hagar, with a sniff of her little nose which reminded you of a squirrel over its nut. "Master carried the robes out hisself, and has been a-dusting them agin the sun fence ever since."

"Now that it is all settled," said Mrs. Arnold, with a gentle sigh, for her delicate conscience was not quite at rest, "we'd better fix up a little, Hannah, for there's no knowing when the visitors may come. Hagar, tell Dan to build a fire in the out room; there is plenty of pine knots under the kitchen stairs, and everything handy."

"I'll 'tend to that," said Hagar, plunging her knife into the bread. "There's Dan coming now with the sleigh-bells in his hand. Suppose he wants me to scour 'em up for him. There ain't no end to his wants."

Sure enough, just as Mrs. Arnold and her daughter left the kitchen, Dan entered, dragging a huge black bear-skin robe in one hand, and with a string of bells jingling in the other.

Dan was rather more than six feet high; while Hagar stood just four feet ten in her highest heeled shoes. Dan was large and portly, with a glossy black skin, and a little stoop in the shoulders; Hagar was straight as an arrow, and held her head back, pretty like a quail when it walks the spring turf. Dan had large feet, large hands, and was altogether a little ponder-

ous; Hagar was quick, wiry, and, to use one's complimentary way of expressing it, "sharp as a steel trap."

Hagar suspected what her fellow slave wanted, and kept on shaving off slices of bread from the loaf with great diligence.

"Hagar, here is a great long slit in the bear-skin. Master tore it agin the stun wall. S'posing you jes take a needle and sew 'em up, 'cause it's going to be wanted now, I tell you."

"I'se got more to 'tend to now than I'se likely to get along with," said Hagar, pushing aside the slices of bread, and sweeping the crumbs into one hand with the palm of the other. Who's going to help me, I should like to know? There's the fire to build in the out room, and oven wood to get in, and pine knots to split up. Who's going to help me, I say, with all the family going to meeting and every which way?"

"I'll help you, Hagar; who else has a right to that felicitation?" said Dan, bending grandly over the little woman; "only jest get your needle and stitch up the little bit of a tear, jest to satisfy master, and see if I don't come up to the mark."

Hagar dusted the crumbs from her hands, took a wooden needle poppet from her bosom, which Dan recognized, with a broad smile, as his own gift, selected a coarse needle, threaded it, and then explored the depths of her pocket for a steel side-thimble, and, thus equipped, drew the bear-skin on her lap, and soon put it in order.

"Now," said Dan, coaxingly, "if you would jest touch up these 'ere bells a trifle with a little brick dust."

"Touch 'em up yourself," said Hagar, with a toss of her little head. "Bells ain't my work, no how."

"Yes," said Dan, benignly, "scouring belongs to the women folks. How often I've stood by to watch them 'ere hands of yourn a sliding up and down the knives! It ed be a shame for any other person to touch scouring in this house, I've said so fifty times."

"Well, take away the bear-skin and give me the bells. Mighty good care you've taken on 'em."

"Hagar," said Dan, stooping low, and speaking in a bland, confidential voice, "it's beginning to snow. There's half an inch on the ground this minute."

"Well, that's no secret. I can see for myself."

"Yes, Hagar, but I was thinking what's sarse for the goose is sarse for——"

"Oh! git away, Dan, and don't talk poetry to me."

"Wal, then, Hagar, if the rest on 'em are going a sleighing to-morrow, why shouldn't we?"

Hagar gave sure evidence that she was really smart as a steel trap; her eyes began to sparkle, her little figure isolated itself.

"You don't mean that 'ere, now, Dan?"

"Yes, I do. There's the cutter that I painted a beautiful yaller, only last fall, jest the dandy for us; then here's the bear-skin, you'll sit under it, Hagar, as snug and warm as a biscuit; and then them bells—ah! you've got to work at 'em—won't they glisten and jingle? I'll heat a brick, and do it up in flannel for your feet. It needn't be a large brick for them feet, Hagar. Then, as for the driving, perhaps, I don't know how to make old Jack go. Gingle! crack! dash! here we go! Snow-balls flying from the horse's huffs, fences running away from us, a jumper every which while in the road, the cutter going slap 'long over it. There, Hagar, that will do. They're bright as a new dollar, every bell on 'em. Much obliged. Now if you would just build that fire in the out room, while I get the cutter in order. If pine knots are wanted, you'll find an axe at the back door, with a beautiful barked log to lay them against. If master'll only let me have the cutter and old Jack, we'll be sure to have that sleigh-ride."

With this Dan gathered up his robe and the bells, made a motion with his hand, threw an imaginary kiss high over Hagar's head, and disappeared, leaving the little negress in a state of hazy doubt whether Dan had been putting all his work on her or not.

Now, in a fair battle of intellect or temper, Hagar was five times a match for her fellow-slave; but then Dan seldom got into a temper, and was sure to meet her acuteness with glazing flattery and that small cunning which is often available where good sense fails. The great, tall fellow absolutely believed that he was superior to the little steel trap, because he usually prevailed over her. So Hagar went down on her knees, and fanned the shovel full of live coals which lay in a heap of glowing red under the fire of hickory wood she had crossed over the tall, brass andirons, and pursed out her India rubber cheeks into a pair of bellows, circling them with her linsey-woolsey apron, which she held tight between her two hands. At last a tongue of flame shot up the fine splinters, and licked the delicate moss from the wood, till the cloud of smoke turned into sheets of flame, which danced cheerily over the tall andirons and brightened all over the room.

Just as Hagar stood on the hearth, regarding

her work, Mrs. Arnold and Hannah came in, looking quite picturesque and beautiful. You might travel a week anywhere and not find a more charming figure than Hannah exhibited when she came in, with her bottle-green skirt, and crimson short gown trimmed with black gimp, and that fall of narrow ruffles, meeting at the throat, and leaving the shapely neck free in its motions, which were graceful as those of a canary bird when it sings; calf-skin shoes covered over black stockings, with long, crimson clocks at the ankles, completed a costume that Hagar considered quite enhancing.

"Isn't she nice, Hagar?" said Mrs. Arnold, smoothing the soft, brown hair that lay like satin on each side the young girl's head. "A nice, obedient girl, I mean?" she continued, blushing at the motherly pride that broke forth in her words.

"Nice as a new pin," chimed in Hagar, folding her arms, and facing round to take a full survey. "If she don't catch a beau this time I lose my guess."

Hannah blushed, and smiled, and looked slyly at her mother; while Hagar stood criticising them both, with her head on one side, and both arms reposing on her little chest.

"Am I too fine, Hagar?" said Mrs. Arnold, flushing a little at the idea; "anything wrong?"

"Well now, if the crown of that 'ere cap stood up a little higher behind, kinder like a fan, you know, and the ribbon that goes round the head was yaller, or blue, or red, instead of black, it'd be more scrumptious, according to my notion. Then, if you'd make the plaits of that 'ere muslin handkercher fall open in front, jest enough to show the string of gold beads, with a little more of the neck—for it's almost as white as our Hannah's after all—I shouldn't find much fault. The roll of that hair jest back from the forehead is handsome as a pictur; and then that brown silk dress has got so much rustle in it. Well, I can't say as there is much fault to find. Now jest set down here, both on you, while I go and get the supper under way. Dan has got to help me to-night, any way."

CHAPTER II.

WHILE these preparations were going on in the old farm house, a little cavalcade, consisting of two gentlemen and a lady, followed by a negro servant, were galloping through a sweep of woods half a score of miles south of Norwich.

They made a merry party, with their gay laughter and jests, as they spurred quickly on over the frozen road, for the day was cold, and

it was evident that a gust of snow was fluttering up on the wind from the eastern hills.

The girl was in the first bloom of womanhood; a rich, dark brunette, with cheeks like the side of a September peach that has ripened next the sun, and eager, changing eyes that anticipated every smile upon her full lips, and gave to her face a piquant beauty quite indescribable. She sat her horse admirably, and her lithe, slender form showed to advantage, in spite of the fur wrappings which the day demanded. With it all there was something very un-English in her appearance, although she spoke the language with no perceptible accent. The gentleman at her right hand bore sufficient resemblance to her to betray the relationship between them, but the brother's dark features had none of the brilliant color or expression which gave such life to her countenance. Although he joined in the conversation, and smiled frequently at his sister's lively sallies, he seemed naturally a reserved, silent man; and there was something in the stern, black eyes, and about the firm mouth, which betokened a bitter and vindictive temper when once aroused.

Their companion was a man still young, twenty-seven perhaps, almost handsome at times, although the slightly Roman features looked somewhat cold and severe in repose. He was conversing gaily with the girl, and his eyes, at times, fastened themselves upon her face, with an expression which sent a riper color to her cheek, though a smile would tremble over her lips, in spite of every effort to prevent it.

"And you think I will like your sister, and she me?" she said, laughingly. "Really, if she is so sweet and charming as you say, I doubt if I am acting wisely in bringing Paul within her influence."

"My poor Hannah!" he replied, smiling and shaking his head; "she has no more idea of coquetry than a wood pigeon."

"Oh! don't be too sure of that, sir," she interrupted. "Woman's nature is the same the world over, and I would wager my pet curl that, if the truth were known, you would find that even the most innocent and retired little pigeon had her own ideas about subjugating every pert young male within her reach."

"Is that the principle upon which Miss de Montreuil acts?" he asked, quickly.

"Oh! it is unjust to turn my argument against myself," she said, bravely, though the tell-tale color dyed her cheeks again. "It is only your quiet women that I distrust; I am never afraid of any other where Paul is concerned—do you hear, brother?"

"Yes, yes," he replied, with a slight accent. "Haven't you learned, Arnold, that it is useless to contend with Laura? When she finds herself worsted, she leaps clean beyond the argument, and brings up in a totally different quarter."

"It is beginning to snow!" exclaimed Miss de Montreuil, only noticing her brother's remark by an impatient shrug of the shoulders. "See there, Mr. Arnold, it is coming toward us quite rapidly."

"We are nearly through the woods now," he answered, "and there is a little town, not far beyond, where we can rest, if it snows too badly to go on."

"Better push ahead, master," chimed in the old negro; "tain't a gwine to be much snow, but afore mornin' dar'll be sleighing, or I misses my guess."

"Peter's lame arm is an unfailing barometer," said de Montreuil.

The old negro glanced down at the injured member with a puzzled look, as if doubtful what manner of thing that might be, saying, hesitatingly,

"Spect it are, master Paul, and it am achin' doleful all this blessed mornin'."

"Here we are out of the woods!" exclaimed Arnold, as they reached the brow of the hill, from whence the sloping fields betrayed the cultivation of man. "On a bright day, Miss de Montreuil, there is a fine view from this spot."

"But this is not exactly a June zephyr," said her brother."

"Oh! fie! Paul, you never did really appreciate the beautiful. I am sure that it must be very lovely."

"On a day like this it makes but little difference," persisted de Montreuil; "I can see no more pleasure in freezing to death in the garden of Eden than in Nova Zembla."

"There is the tavern," said Arnold, pointing to a long log building at the foot of the descent.

"Is there a little hamlet there?"

"The customary blacksmith's shop and school-house; it would not be Connecticut, you know, without those."

"There is a crowd of men in the field back of the school-house," said de Montreuil; "surely they cannot be holding a patriotic meeting in this storm?"

"More likely a shooting match—remember to-morrow will be Thanksgiving."

"Prime turkeys, I'se warrant," muttered old Peter, elevating himself in his stirrups. "Oh! Guy, ain't it worth while?"

"I have heard so much of these matches,"

said Laura, "but have never had the good fortune to witness one."

"That comes of being shut up in a city all your life, Miss de Montreuil; see how sadly your education has been neglected!"

"I plead guilty, and lament my ignorance. Is there no way of remedying it now?"

"Oh! certainly! You can watch all the proceedings very comfortably from the tavern window. What do you say, de Montreuil?—shall we beg or hire a rifle and take a shot at the old gobbler?"

"Just as you like, *mon ami*; I should rather like to see the sport."

"I haven't tried my hand for years; I should like to know if I have lost my skill."

"After all," said Laura, "it seems rather cruel amusement."

Arnold's look expressed the most perfect astonishment; then a sneer, which she did not see, altered the lines of his mouth into an expression almost revolting.

"It may be so," he replied, "but Connecticut youths are not trained to think so; our fair saint will give us absolution if we follow the barbarous customs of those about us."

"Oh! I confess to a desire to see the sport, but I don't half like it, after all."

"Come on, then, where your curiosity can be gratified, and I'll warrant that you will forget your scruples."

A rapid ride down the hill soon brought them to the little tavern, where they dismounted, and were ushered, with due ceremony, into the best room of which the house could boast.

The crowd in the field were not so busy with their preparations but that the strangers were duly remarked; and they proved themselves possessed of that laudable spirit of curiosity, which has so fully developed itself in the descendants of the worthy puritan fathers.

Old Peter went into the field to hire a rifle for his master, and a little group immediately gathered about him, plying the old servant with so many questions, that he stood, rolling his eyes about, in open-mouthed and helpless amazement. But Peter's elocutionary powers were upon too grand a scale for him to be long crushed, even by such numbers, and, recovering his speech, he poured forth such a voluble account of the glory of his master and all his family, past and present, that even Yankee curiosity could not well have craved a more complete account.

"And that 'ere's young Arnold with him?" asked a long, gaunt specimen, when the sable servitor paused for breath. "He used to live down to Norridge, and his folks is there yet."

"And he and that French feller want to try their skill at shootin' agin us, dew they?" asked another, bringing his rifle heavy down upon the ground. "Wall, tell 'em to come on. I'll let 'em have my old soger cheap, though it ain't used to bein' hired out to furreners."

"And what dew they think of imports and taxations?" asked a stout old farmer. "The time's come when a man likes to know who he's a-neighborin' with."

"Oh! get away," rejoined the first speaker, "old Arnold's a riglar true blue, and his son takes after him. I'll bet there hain't a drop o' tea wet their whistles since the last taxation."

"Arnold's got a darter, hain't he?" asked some one.

"Of course he has," retorted the stout farmer; "dew you think Jake Dennis would stand up for him so, ef there wasn't a female in the case?"

"That's all yew know about it," grumbled the discomfited defender of Mr. Arnold's patriotism, when the laugh at his expense had ceased, "I guess you'd better finish your business, if you want any shootin' to-day, and leave me alone."

The hint was a timely one, and the crowd moved away from Peter, and busied themselves about their concluding arrangements. The luckless fowls were taken out of the baskets, and flung, securely tied, upon the ground; and one fine old turkey gobbler, with a blood red crest, was selected as the first to be put up at the "mark."

Several men tried their skill, but proved unsuccessful, as it was only by hitting the turkey's head that the prize could be gained; and, as the old gobbler was by no means inclined to keep his red crested head erect, and allow his enemies a fair shot, the task was by no means an easy one.

The discomfited men were greeted with shouts of laughter; for it is a peculiarity of human nature that we are even more than usually delighted with other people's failures, when about running the same risk ourselves.

Jake Dennis proved the fortunate competitor, and then a variety of trials followed in quick succession. When the sport was at its height, Arnold and his friend came out of the tavern and crossed the field to the match-ground.

De Montreuil gazed about him with amused curiosity—and to one unaccustomed to things of the sort, the scene was not devoid of interest. The animated looks of the crowd, the eagerness of the competitors, the ill-concealed chagrin of those defeated, and the quiet self-complacency of the winners, were excessively amusing.

"Dew you want to try your hand?" asked

the old farmer of Arnold, after another fine turkey had been set up.

"If I may, certainly."

He took the rifle which the old man handed him, and, lifting it with a sure aim, fired—the bird's head fell upon the snow several feet from the body. A shout of applause followed the feat, for there had been no shot equal to it.

"There ain't no Tory blood in yew, I'll bet," said the old farmer; "you are the sort to be depended on."

Arnold looked at him keenly.

"You seem a true patriot," he said.

"I guess they'll find me one when the time comes," he replied, with an emphatic nod.

Arnold placed in his hand the turkey he had won, and thanked him for the use of his rifle.

"You and I will have a little talk before I leave here. Come, de Montreuil, as you won't try your skill, let us go, your sister will be tired of waiting. How it does snow, we shall be in the midst of a storm!"

"Where is Peter?" asked the Frenchman, when they had reached the tavern. "I declare the old fool is going to take a shot, and he is as timid with a gun as an old woman."

The truth was, Peter had bragged and vaunted his powers until he found himself in an unpleasant situation. Several slaves had followed their masters, armed with blunderbusses, shot-guns, horse-pistols, or any other species of firearms they could lay their hands upon, in the expectation of being allowed a share in the sport toward the close. Now, one bad tempered negro was an excellent marksman, and Peter had irritated him until it was decided that they must either fight it out, rough-and-tumble, or shoot against each other at a mark.

Affairs had reached a crisis; the belligerent negro threatened, and Peter showed the whites of his eyes in terror. His vaunting spirit had carried him further than he intended. He looked about for his master; he was too far off to protect him, nor did he show any disposition to interfere. He looked among the crowd—the matchers had ceased their sport to watch the coming fun.

"My massa wants me," stuttered Peter.

The tall negro extended in his left hand a rifle, and doubled up his ponderous right fist directly under Peter's rolling eyes.

"Yer kin take yer chise," he said, coolly. "Can't hev no city niggers a flourishin' it over 'spectable colored pussons."

"Stand up to him, Jupe!" shouted the laughing crowd. "Don't let any strange darkies impose upon you."

"I ain't a strange darkey, I ain't, no how, but was born and broughten up in these parts as well as the rest on yer—now, who wants to 'pose upon him?" expostulated Peter. "I'll meet him like a man, but just now marster wants me."

"Can't help it," said Jupe, determinedly; "I wan't yer tew. Now, which is it to be, this're blunderbuss, or a taste of this 'ere," and he brought his huge fist into dangerous proximity with his frightened opponent's nose, which was in all conscience flat enough by nature.

Peter trembled in his shoes; he glanced at the fist and at the rifle—either was bad enough! He grabbed the rifle—shut his eyes—pulled the trigger and fired. They had given him an unloaded gun, but it was all the same to Peter! He gave one bound, while the crowd were in convulsions of laughter, and started for the tavern, followed by a crowd of hooting boys.

So extreme was the poor fellow's terror that he dashed past his master, and flew into the room where Laura de Montreuil stood laughing as heartily as the others.

"Save me, Misses," he screamed; "I'se killed a man and now they want to hang me for doing on't."

With this pathetic appeal, Pete crowded himself under the settee, and it required half an hour's persuasion to get him out. Not till after he had been repeatedly assured that the crowd had dispersed and Jupe gone home with his master could he be induced to come forth; and a pitiful looking object he was, when he came into the light. His portly carcass seemed really flattened, his snowy wool was specked with dust, and his neat riding suit woefully soiled.

In pity to his terror they got off as quickly as possible. Peter spoke never a word during several miles, but when they came in sight of Norwich, Peter's spirits began to revive and with them his vaunting spirit returned.

He rode close behind his master and whispered confidentially,

"Marster Paul, 'spec that ar Jupe was wuss skeered than he made believe, but I'se glad I didn't kill him, any how."

The mirth with which this confidence was received excited Peter's displeasure. He snorted disdainfully, drew his horse back and rode on in solemn silence, reserving all attempts to convince himself and others of his bravery until a more auspicious period.

The hour in which one sits, full dressed, to wait for company, is always a tedious one. Until that time, Mrs. Arnold had not really had time to feel of a certainty that her son was coming

home. While there was anything to embellish or arrange she could ward off all impatience; but now the very rustle of her dress reminded her every instant that he was coming, and her heart beat and fluttered in that gentle bosom with yearning eagerness to behold him.

Hannah, too, was in a state of considerable excitement. She moved softly from seat to seat, smoothed her glossy hair before the looking-glass, and smiled to see how bright and blooming was the face that looked back upon her.

"I wonder if he will think me improved!" she thought. "The last time he came home, I remember he complained of my stooping. It was because we had just finished the fall weaving, and one gets a habit of stooping in the loom; but he won't find fault about that now. Hagar says I am as straight as an arrow. I wish my hands wasn't quite so brown and hard, he spoke about that, too; but then hard work will show itself, do what one will."

"Isn't that the sound of horses coming down the road, Hannah?" cried Mrs. Arnold, half rising.

"No, mother, I think not. It is father coming round the house in his heavy boots."

"No, no; I am sure—I am sure he is coming."

How that motherly heart began to swell and beat! The glow of tenderness in her eyes was beautiful to look upon.

"He is coming, Hannah. Hark!"

That moment the front door opened, and a face, all tanned and weather-beaten with outdoor work, looked in: a strong, earnest face, such as we seldom meet in these days. You would not have believed that such depth of affection could belong to the face.

"Wife! daughter! he is coming! Our son is in sight."

They started forward in a group, and, standing upon the door stone, gazed eagerly along the road, regardless of the snow that fell softly around them, scattering their heads and garments with floating down.

Three persons on horseback, two men and a woman, were coming full gallop through the storm.

Yes, it was young Arnold and his friends. They rode swiftly up to the gate, both the young men dismounted, and Mrs. Arnold stood waiting, with heart in her mouth, while her son deliberately lifted the young lady from her saddle. Then he came forward, and she fell upon his bosom.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)